Following the Gospel: The Assemblies of God Missionary Effort in New Delhi, India

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I, Clark Jensen, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

The growth of the global Pentecostal movements that rely upon successful proselytism evidenced by the conversion and rupture in previously non-Pentecostal populations is explored in this multi-sited ethnography of the Assemblies of God (AG). I theorize the missionary effort and the affiliated churches in New Delhi, North India through the lens of global market capitalism.

The research was conducted in multiple sites including churches, bible colleges, missionary training meetings, and evangelistic outreaches. The subjects include first generation converts to AG Pentecostalism, Indian AG clergy and laity, USA missionaries, and denominational leaders. I imagine Indian lay leaders as labourers who relationally cultivate converts. They welcome mostly chronically poor *Dalits* into their churches, initially offering promises of the Holy Spirit's intervention to solve problems, and then much later compel these participants to an authentic conversion marked by rupture from previous subjectivities (beliefs and values) and social belonging (relationships and identity). These same converts are represented in stories that are traded back to USA donors, thus completing the network of trade.

This study explores the AG missionary effort to North India as global trade, the conversion process as a negotiated exchange, the Holy Spirit as compelling affect, Indian clergy as icons of the aspirations of Dalit converts, and the AG community as the locale of realization for a Made Pure identity in the socio-economic uplift of converts. This study contributes to the Anthropology of Christianity by enquiring into the success of the global Pentecostal movement, the motivations of converts, the motivations and process of conversion careers, and the ethics of conversion as a negotiated exchange of sacrifices.

Impact Statement

My hope is that this thesis would provide a detailed and holistic exploration of the Assemblies of God (AG) missionary effort in North India. The analysis that I present contributes a multi-sited ethnography from the perspective of a researcher who is a former participant of the system in question. It specifically traces the interactions and commodities that characterize exchanges through which the missionary effort has grown and continues to thrive in the North Indian context. In doing so, this thesis adds to existing scholarship of the globalization of Pentecostal Christianity and adds new frameworks through which to view these processes.

In writing this thesis, I also hope to widen the discussion around the practice, efficacy, and ethics of Assemblies of God World Missions and provide both an in-depth and global understanding of the exchanges and relationships inherent in similar movements. My aim is to provide both insiders and outsiders of the AG missionary effort in North India a more nuanced exploration of its activities and how those activities might be interpreted in the context of anthropological scholarship as well as social and economic outcomes for marginalized peoples.

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Acronyms

AG	Assemblies of God
AGNI	Assemblies of God of North India
AGWM	Assemblies of God World Missions
AIIMS	All India Institute of Medical Science
BAM	Business as Mission
BC	Backward Caste
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CBC	Central Bible College
CP	Church Planting
GVC	Global Value Chain
IC	Indian Clergy
IGT	Intergenerational Transmission
JMC	Jesus and Mary College
MPE	Made Pure Embrace
NCR	National Capital Region
NIV	New International Version
NMG	Norddeutsche Missiongesellschaft
NT	New Testament
OBC	Other Backward Classes
OT	Old Testament
PJ	Pentecostal Jatis
PV	Pentecostal Varnas
ROI	Return on Investment
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SC	Scheduled Caste

SSG   Subaltern Studies Group

SSS   Saved Soul Stories

ST   Scheduled Tribe

UPG's   Unreached People Groups

USA   United States of America

Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

This is the insider who became outsider telling of a Pentecostal missionary effort to evangelize and plant churches in New Delhi, India and the resulting local brand of classic[1] Pentecostal Christianity. The subjects of the study are not only converts from a particularly new Christian community, but also Indian clergy as well as missionaries from multiple sites that represent the Assemblies of God (AG) institution as it stretches from the USA to North India.

Not long ago, I came across this entry in one of my poorly managed missionary journals, personal reflections at the time I was a missionary, that document an experience that perfectly introduces the major themes of this monograph. The occasion was 'special meetings' where I was the guest preacher accompanied by a team of American doctors. At the end of the meeting, prayer was offered for healing. Yet, those in need quickly moved from my prayer line to that of the medical professional seeking the relief of western medicine over the promise of the Holy Spirit's intervention. It was comical at the time, yet years later this experience exposes my own process of questioning to better understand the missionary enterprise and the appeal of Pentecostalism globally.

> 'They want something that works. They are willing to try a new god, especially if the expected commitment level is low. They are happy to give little in exchange for hope. They are willing to walk forward in front of their peers to join in Christian prayers. Their old religion and doctors have failed to bring them relief. They hope that a foreign religion has the power. But then quickly an even better option is available, western medicine! They are constantly searching for something that works, a cure for the ailments of their human condition and freedom from the oppressions of life. Straddling a fence… one foot trying to maintain connection to past family traditions, holy books, and local village gods, the other curious to

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[1] 'Classic' Pentecostalism as a denominational outgrowth of the Azusa Street revival is often distinguished from later 'Charismatic' and 'new wave' Pentecostal movements.

explore foreign solutions on the other side, dangling between security and hope.'

My central thesis is that the success of the AG, a global Pentecostal movement, is the result of three primary exchanges from which participants experience social, economic, and spiritual benefit and through which a global relational affiliation is produced. These exchanges are negotiations between various actors in the global AG commodity chain. Converts are cultivated in India by clergy and laity who initially offer free participation, and later offer strict, high intensity demands. This includes a strict break from Hinduism. The stories of these converts are then commoditized and sold to donor churches in the USA. The networks and connections between donors, missionaries, Indian clergy, and converts represent a neo-colonial, relationally governed, global business enterprise in which a series of power inequities lead to ethically troubling unequal exchanges.

I add to the growing body of knowledge produced under the Anthropology of Christianity. Two compilations of ethnographic works, *The Limits of Meaning* (Engelke and Tomlinson 2006) and *The Anthropology of Christianity* (Cannell 2006) highlight the growing expanse of the discourse. This is project is unique in that it is not a significant contribution to the comparative project to examine 'what is specific and what is shared' (Engelke and Tomlinson 2006: 20) through ethnographies of Christian communities and practices on a local level. Rather, it is an attempt to view the entire missionary enterprise, and whilst it includes some description of local Pentecostalism, it is not a detailed ethnography of a particular expression but a sketch of a global Pentecostal network.

The focus of this project is the largest of the classic Pentecostal denominations, the Assemblies of God, and its missionary engagement in the Indian capital city, New Delhi. Pentecostalism is a Christian movement that, in recent years, has grown to encompass large portions of Christian populations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The AG

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denomination was founded in Hot Springs, Arkansas in 1914 and has grown to an estimated 60 million worldwide with only three million of those now in the U.S.A. According to denominational literature, 'the church emphasizes personal salvation, water baptism, divine healing, the baptism of the Holy Spirit accompanied by the evidence of speaking in tongues, and the premillennial[2] second coming of Jesus Christ'. In addition, the denomination has over 4,000 active missionaries (Assemblies of God 2017). The AG story is one of rapid and widespread expansion. An AG church is planted every 95 minutes, and a convert is won every 37 seconds.[3] This expansion is the result of an aggressive evangelistic enterprise of proselytism and church planting.

Modi's Post-Colonial India

Post-colonial North India offers a variety of intriguing variables related to this project. India continues to evolve rapidly as a result of urbanization, globalization, modernization and westernization. It is known for pluralism and hybridity. Under the leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Narendra Modi (current Prime Minister of India and former Chief Minister of Gujarat, a Hindu nationalist and member of the right-wing Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)), India's neoliberal policies have opened the country up for business as a fully participating member of the global economy.

Hinduism, the primary religion of India, is often described as pluralistic, fluid, and non-dogmatic (Varma 2006). Hindu henotheism allows worshipers to choose amongst a multitude of divinities, including Jesus, for their *ishtadevata* or 'God of choice'. Statisticians using the data reported by church organizations have claimed that practicing Pentecostal

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[2] Premillennialism is the belief that the return of Jesus or 'second coming' will occur before a literal thousand-year reign of Christ from Jerusalem upon the earth. It is a motivating factor for aggressive evangelism or proselytism.
[3] Influence Magazine 2017.

Christians in India had reached 33.5 million strong or nearly three per cent of India's population by the end of the last millennium.[4] Even taking into account over-reporting by Christian churches and mission organizations, given that historically the majority of India's Christian population has been comprised of non-Pentecostal Protestants in the northeast and Catholics in the south,[5] this represents a significant growth of Pentecostalism. It appears to be in line with Asia, which has seen a rise from half a per cent in 1970 to three and a half per cent of the population in 2005 (Pew Research Centre 2006).

This growth is in spite of socio-political resistance. Post-colonial literature demonstrates that visions of a pan-Indian identity reject the inclusion of Christianity (Kakar 1979; Sen 2006; Varma 2006; Kakar and Poggendorf 2007). This is, in part, due to India's rich religious and political discourse of anti-conversion. The Sangh Parivar, the family of political Hindu associations, espouses the ideology that religions other than Hinduism represent a foreign invasion (Basu et al. 1993; Van der Veer 1994; Hansen and Jaffrelot 2001). This ideology was in some part behind the success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that took power in the 1998 national elections and more recently in the 2014 election supporting Narendra Modi, a politician known for his right-wing Hindu nationalism. It has also driven a marked increase in anti-Christian and anti-conversion rhetoric such as Arun Shourie's polemical *Missionaries in India* (1994) and *Harvesting our Souls* (2000), as well as a 'national debate' on religious conversion (Mosse 2012: 200).

Hindutva is seen by some to be an attempt to 'salvage Hindu cultural identity' in an age of modernization (Kakar 2001: 329) and, therefore, views conversion as a 'humiliating attack on Hinduism, even a national security threat' (Mosse 2012: 200). Swami Dayananda

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[4] *NIDPCM*; Barrett et al. 2001.
[5] Pentecostals and charismatics make up approximately five per cent of Indian Christians. https://www.pewforum.org/2006/10/05/spirit-and-power/

Saraswati, the founder of *Arya Samaj*,[6] goes a step further by claiming that 'conversion is violence' and 'religious conversion… incites communal violence. It is violence and it breeds violence' (as quoted by Roberts 2013: 272). Secular cultural relativism, which considers all religions as equally false, aligns with political Hindu conceptions of conversion as coercion. Anti-conversion arguments and resulting cultural narratives form a stiff defence against the proselytizing efforts of western religion among communities and families with strong cohesion. Past failures and on-going resistance have not, however, resulted in a weakened effort by AG missionaries who continue to focus upon North India as part of the 'unreached peoples' conversion project.

Methods

In conducting a multi-sited ethnography, I collected data through interviews, participant observation, documentary analysis, and surveys. My field notes were written in a variety of settings, including church meetings, pastors' meetings, bible college classes, and missionary trainings. I participated as a congregant, teacher, friend, and former colleague and observed among Indian converts, Indian clergy, bible college students and teachers, missionaries, and donors, ~~including~~ USA clergy. As a result, I spent a great deal of time in a variety of both formal and informal social settings. In addition to the participant observation and interviews, I gathered several sources of print and electronic data from denominational literature, reports, and church websites. I also recorded sermons and gathered written materials including a bible college syllabus and denominational reports, promotional materials, internal missionary correspondence, and various other pamphlets and advertisements that provide insight into major themes and other background data.

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[6] The *Arya Samaj* is a reform movement in Hinduism founded in 1875.

This study makes a unique contribution to the Anthropology of Christianity by exposing a global view, rather than singular or local, of an international phenomenon. It uses a multi-sited and multi-national view of the prolific classic denomination. In this sense, the approach is attuned to the globalized process it hopes to describe.

The disadvantage of the scope of this research is that it is not a detailed or ground-up study of a Pentecostal community. Rather, my research imaginary traces and describes the connections and relationships (Marcus 1999: 14) among three groups of actors (converts, clergy, and missionaries) across multiple locations (convert households, churches, and other ritual gatherings) in India (Central Bible College, New Delhi) and donor churches, including the centennial celebration and missionary training at the AG headquarters in Springfield, Missouri, USA.

The advantage of the scope is that the research focuses upon active missionary engagement while most anthropological work on Christianity has focused upon Christian communities or churches within former colonized settings without embedding into the sub-culture of colonizing missionaries.[7]

Marcus outlines appropriate multi-sited inquiries as 'studying the relationships of dispersed communities and networks that define well-designated macro-processes in the global flow of capital and expertise' (Marcus 1999: 618). As 'the essence of multi-sited research is to follow people, connections, associations, and relationships across space (because they are substantially continuous but spatially non-contiguous)' (Falzon 2005: 1-2), it is the perfect approach for a project that seeks to understand the AG as the flow of products across borders by hearing the experiences of the missionaries, clergy, and converts. Hovland (2009) utilized a similar approach and 'examined the connections and

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[7] See among others Mosse 2012; Joshi 2012; Roberts 2012; Robbins 2004; Meyer 1999; Smilde 2007; Brusco 1995; Chesnut 1997; Cucchiari 1990; Martin 1990; and Corten 1999.

flows between people' affiliated to the NMS (Norwegian Mission Society). He tracked different understandings of the missionary role 'operating in dispersed geographical sites' (2009: 136).

I will trace the gospel attempting to describe a 'biography of a thing' (Kopytoff 1996: 66) from a 'finished product(s)' back to the source through a series of transmission and formation sites that include missionaries themselves. The research was designed into three stages corresponding to three groups of AG social actors: converts, clergy, and missionaries. I used an approach of 'studying up' from Indian churches located in Delhi and other convert social settings to clergy social and training sites, various missionary training venues, and, finally, to the oversight headquarters.

Data Collection

I started by cultivating my past relationships to see if I could gain the trust of some key interlocutors from each of the social groups that represent the AG missionary effort. These groups include missionaries, pastors, bible college teachers, and Indian church members and converts. Informants have been extremely helpful, surprisingly reflective, and have offered key clarifications and insights to fill in the empty spaces where my distance left me either with incomplete or slightly skewed understandings. Convenience sampling of informants allowed for a more rapid and efficient identification of individuals with knowledge of potential interviewees and observational sites for me to investigate.

To help me with interviewing and transcribing, I hired a research assistant who has a Master of Arts graduate degree from the Delhi School of Economics. She is also the wife of a junior AG pastor in Delhi who provided access to and a natural rapport between her and

the interviewees. As a trained researcher, she was constantly aware of her bias and adopted an outsider perspective as much as possible by relaying information dispassionately. My Hindi did allow me to have casual conversations that helped with building rapport, yet my lack of vocabulary prohibited me from undertaking and confidently recording Hindi responses. Therefore, I relied upon my assistant to provide Hindi translation.

In addition to working in these settings, my assistant and I gathered oral life and conversion histories of first generation converts. We generated over 30 oral histories that were followed up with 10 semi-structured interviews that include detailed questions about the conversion process.

These culture-specific oral stories have demonstrated 'veracity' in the Indian context and are especially effective for use with Dalit populations and conversion histories (Arnold and Blackburn 2004: 4). The narration of one's own conversion story is both an explanation of a personal religious experience, as well as a performance of religious identity (Bielo 2012). The process of adopting and using evangelical language is an important process of conversion stories as converts convey their own personal transformation and conflicting emotions that are experienced before conversion (Stromberg 1993; Harding 1987). I involved the pastors of these churches in selecting 8-10 individuals from each of their congregations that represent 'typical' first generation converts. I am aware that these individuals may represent 'ideal types' as the senior pastors recommended them and may have selected those who reflect AG conversion values. Pastors may have had an underlying assumption that this research may be published and affect the broader representation of AG churches in Delhi. These life history 'testimonies' included information about converts' lives prior to conversion, the stated motivation for conversion, process of conversion, and the forces that they negotiated in making their decisions to convert. Most also included a description of their post-conversion lives with special attention given to details that have

changed.

Based upon the oral histories, I determined that I needed more information in this area since converts consistently reported a rise in their socio-economic status after joining the church. Every person that we spoke with said that they, as well as everybody else, had significantly risen from low/lower-middle class to solidly middle class in two to five years. I felt this was significant given that utilitarian motivations are a large part of theory related to conversion in India and that financial inducement is a charge that anti-conversion Hindu nationalists make against Christians in India. Therefore, I wanted to ask questions about the key factors that resulted in this rise. I conducted 10 of these more detailed interviews.

To supplement the semi-structured interviews, I took field notes from participant observation among three churches where I attended formal and informal (Albrecht 1999) gatherings. The 'sacred' sites associated with this stage include weekly 'worship services', home meetings or 'cell groups', and special meetings of 'heightened millennial enthusiasm' (Robbins 2010: 164) or perhaps heightened expectation of ecstatic experience. The larger gatherings are known as 'special', revival, camp, or healing meetings and 'crusades'. I attended multiple meetings and events including regular Sunday church gatherings, special healing meetings, concerts, youth events, home meetings for prayer, and special events, baptisms, and Eucharist rituals. At large and formal gatherings, I declined most invitations to take a public role. This minimal participation was intentional to create some distance and support an etic perspective. I felt this was needed to supplement my long history of complete participation in which I was a central actor with an emic view. I video and audio recorded several of these events for future recall purposes and have more than 40 separate field note entries from formal meetings.

I also gathered data at the 'Assembly of God Missionary Archive' in Springfield,

Missouri missionary headquarters to provide contextual and supplemental data. I gathered a list of all North India missionaries in AG history and 'newsletters' (reports back to donors) from most of the active missionaries in the Delhi region going back three years. Given the strong emphasis on martyrdom in current AG missionary promotions, I requested and received reports of all AG missionary martyrs throughout the AG's 100-year history.

Lastly, I developed several survey tools that were used across the various sites for the purpose of comparing missionaries, Indian clergy, and first generation converts. These tools include a Morality Ranking Tool which converts used to rank 'sins', as well as a Cosmos Map Tool which converts used to map themselves in relation to gods and spirits. The tool I found most useful was Logics Preached that outlines what converts reported as the common messages preached by their pastors. I wanted to compare this with those parts of the AG cannon that missionaries valued and with the AG clergy in Delhi in order to tease out differences of emphasis appropriated by each.

Three Urban Churches

In the first phase of research, I focused upon first generation converts that represent the product of the AG missionary venture. These converts were affiliated with three AG Hindi-speaking congregations in New Delhi along with their branch churches. I purposely sampled churches according to their locations and the lead clergy/pastors' backgrounds. I have included one church in a slum on the edge of Kalkaji primarily attended by former North Indian day labourers pastored by Kapil, one in an upper-class neighbourhood primarily attended by Tamil migrants who commute from various parts of south Delhi pastored by Vinod, and one in a middle-class suburb in Faridabad attended primarily by North Indian, Hindi speakers pastored by Irwan.

Each congregation has a Sunday morning gathering of between 300 and 400 people as well as multiple branch churches representing hundreds more. I would estimate that together the three churches represent 1,500 to 2,000 weekly attenders. Each also has multiple compassion outreaches that serve thousands more, mostly children in education or orphan care programs.

Returning to India a decade after my missionary career had ended as a researcher, I started by contacting old friends and asked them to open their lives and congregations to me. I started by contacting Vinod and he offered to pick me up at the airport. We had kept in touch over the years and it was easy to jump into friendly banter. I was unsure of how he, other Indian pastors, and missionaries would feel about being the subject of my investigation and the resulting interpretations. I was pleasantly surprised on this occasion. Vinod said with a somewhat dry sense of humour 'so, brother Clark, you want to write about us?' He then suggested that I hire the wife of one of his junior pastors as my research assistant. When Vinod not only agreed but offered further suggestions about how to make the project successful, I was more confident that he was comfortable.

We drove to his home, a small parsonage in one of the buildings of the main AG administration office in South Extension Part 2, in South Delhi. The three-story building of approximately 4,500 square feet was purchased by missionaries in the 1970's and is now surrounded by high-end houses. It is also the site where Vinod's Tamil and Hindi services, as well as other smaller AG congregations pastored separately but sharing unused spaces to maximize the buildings capacity, meet.

The converts of the congregations that I focused on and those who shared their stories with me vary in their social/caste and economic realities. Normally, new attenders come from poor backgrounds and those who have been a part of the church longer live more

middle class lifestyles. Two senior pastors and one junior pastor explicitly mentioned that most new converts are from low caste or Dalit backgrounds. Vinod, being the exception, stated that every new convert comes out of very difficult circumstances.

Dalit is an umbrella term that groups together all traditionally oppressed groups in India. I use the term to denote technically scheduled castes, tribes, and other backward castes as well as anyone coming out of chronic intergenerational poverty. This is congruent with how Indian Pastors used it when they told me that most Indian Pentecostal converts stem from a Dalit background.

In actuality, the participants in this study represent a variety of castes and backgrounds. The background of those who shared their oral history including Brahmins (10 per cent), Kshatriyas (20 per cent), those who identify with the service caste or Vaishya (20 per cent) and the remaining 50 per cent from the scheduled castes or low caste Shudra's. Those lower caste respondents that offered more detail identified as Harijans from Madhya Pradesh, Prajapati Jatt from Delhi, Venkates from Karnataka, and Nadar from Tamil Nadu. The socioeconomic and caste census of 2011 indicates that roughly two-thirds of India's Christians are scheduled caste (nine per cent), scheduled tribe (32 per cent), or other backward castes (24 per cent). This is lower than both Hindus (73 per cent) and Buddhists (98 per cent). Yet, these figures may not provide an accurate account because scheduled caste Christians are not eligible for reservations. Whilst the affirmative action rights are preserved for Buddhist and Sikh converts, Christians who acknowledge converting are removed from these programs.

Nearly every convert shared that they were coming out of what they all described as desperate situations. As Vinod and I were served a cup of very sweet tea by the helper (also a congregant) that worked in his flat, I asked, 'how would you describe your church?'. His

opening line, 'they are all in problems', concurs with the oral histories to come and for him was a central part of the story. He continued, 'most of them are poor, unless demon possessed or spiritually oppressed'. For Vinod, the reality of his congregants prior to enjoying the benefits of participation in the church fell into two categories: the economically poor and the spiritually oppressed. The helper continued, 'they cannot handle these problems' the church was for them a matter of solving real life problems. He went on to describe the church, more like the answer I was expecting: 'we are community minded and help each other succeed. If a person does not have a job, we help each other because we genuinely want to see each other come up and this is very something different from what is experienced outside the church.' He did not describe the church in theological terms or talk about the quality of the preaching or the music. Rather, the way he saw the importance of his own church was in how they helped each other out of difficult circumstances.

Bible College

Residential bible colleges are a key part of the global AG expansion strategy. They generally serve to facilitate the 'laity to clergy' rite of passage process in AG networks worldwide. In India, three years of bible college are required for a candidate to be considered for ordination. Delhi National Capital Region (NCR) is home to at least three AG residential bible colleges. Other academic options include church-based night bible schools, training centres, and a missionary developed correspondence school that provide alternative paths to 'ministerial credentials' for older students unable to attend residential schools.[8] I spent time at two of the residential colleges in Delhi, one of which traces its roots to the

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[8] These non-residential offerings are understood as useful to prepare adults for service within their local church rather than as launching them into their own ministry.

original AG institutions of Delhi.[9] I participated in significant roles including teaching and consulting with staff and students. My initial encounter with Central Bible College provides an example of these institutes.

Sitting on the back of a motorcycle driven by a student through the narrow confines of an unauthorized colony in South Delhi, I was surprised by the high density of both the buildings and humans and amazed at the ability of drivers to manoeuvre their vehicles through the narrow streets, dodging piles of construction gravel and children playing with makeshift toys. We pulled up to the building. I dismounted and slipped through the gate into the three by nine metre compound that represents the total outdoor space for the college. I thought, as I gazed at the whitish grey concrete walls that were stained black with seepage, 'this operation lacks funding'. These rented residential flats had been converted to accommodate a school and, although relatively recent construction, they were of a low grade and poorly maintained in the same way as other buildings in the low rent community. I was greeted enthusiastically by students all in their 20's and ushered into the staff room where I was introduced to a few of the teachers by my host, one of the senior staff who had arranged for my pickup from the metro station. A student, acting in the role of a household servant, brought chai. The mood was jovial as senior staff joked with younger staff that had mostly graduated from the flagship AG seminary that is situated in Bangalore in South India, the first to grant graduate level degrees including Masters of Theology and Masters of Divinity. The graduate school serves all of India and some surrounding countries by training students who often become professors at smaller bible colleges. The teachers explained that in addition to their teaching duties they were also involved in ministry themselves, either as senior pastors or junior pastors, and that students also are required to participate in weekend ministry. It was a source of pride that the college was staffed by practitioners

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[9] A discipleship centre started by missionaries to help individuals with substance abuse issues.

rather than theorists and that all of the students (apart from females as I later found out) were 'called to church planting ministry'.

I asked to see the syllabus, so a junior teacher dug through a few piles to come up with a booklet that was printed several years earlier. I joked that their course offerings were the same as Central Bible College (CBC) that has served for decades as the flagship AG ministerial college in Springfield, MO, USA. They agreed that it was a copy of a 1970's CBC USA syllabus and had not been modified much since.

I was then told that chapel was starting but to relax because I, along with other senior staff, could join after the preliminaries. The chapel was a converted living room with windows along the back. Rows of plastic chairs faced a small pulpit at the front of the room. The leader, a junior teacher, was partially silhouetted by the bright lights of an LCD player that sent images onto a screen where lyrics of the songs would scroll to allow students to sing along. He led the songs with a forced passion. It was a similar room arrangement and order of program as the Sunday morning meetings of the churches: announcements, greeting of new people (me) and a few songs of corporate singing followed by a sermon delivered by one of the staff, students, or a special guest. The mood was more academic, controlled, cerebral, and less emotional or ecstatic than other AG meetings. There was no jumping, shouting, crying, or prostrating on the floor in prayer, at least not on this day.

As the meeting concluded, I was given the opportunity to interview several students, which I did in a casual manner. Nathan's story is typical, a single male in his mid-twenties from a nearby state, sent to the school by his pastor. His family was very poor and they had 'family problems', and, although he had finished his plus two education at a government school (the equivalent of A levels), he did not go to university and did not have a job. Rather, he assisted the junior pastor of his local AG church in youth ministry (special weekly

meetings along with various activities for adolescents in AG churches). His senior pastor suggested, or as he put it, 'recommended that he go to bible college'. He obeyed and chose the English medium bible college in Delhi, although he confessed, it took him a year to catch up with the language. When I asked about his 'calling', he said he always looked up to the 'pastoral ministry' and felt called. His future plan was to return to his state and 'plant a branch church' under the leadership of his senior pastor. Someday, I guessed, after he became a pastor, he would himself be selecting a young man from his congregation to attend bible college.

USA Missionary Sites

The pastors like Vinod, the bible colleges that trained them, the churches, and the converts are only one half of the project. I also wanted to trace the connections of the compassion projects, institutions, and churches in New Delhi to the missionaries that support them as well as the USA administration and donors. In this final stage of my research I focused upon missionaries in North India as those who act as middlemen in the global network. The sites included training classrooms, private missionary residences, project/work sites, and AG denominational headquarters during the centennial celebration.

I set out to talk to AG missionaries working in North India, many of whom I knew from my time as their colleague. These meetings normally occurred in the missionary's home. I also attended several formal AG missionary gatherings including 'Missionary Renewal', which is a training held for AG missionaries in Springfield, Missouri upon returning from the field for their fundraising cycle. I spent significant time with missionary donors, including with AG church pastors and leaders in the USA where our discussions revolved around the AG missionary effort. I participated in a few informal dinners and coffee meetings, attended the

AG centennial celebration attended by missionaries from 120 countries and a two-day international 'church planting' seminar.

Former Missionary as Researcher

My research was formed by questions that emerged as result of my personal engagement with the AG missionary effort in North India since 1999 and my subsequent personal deconstruction of AG mission practices that ultimately resulted in my resignation from AG missionary status. The missionary practices that drove me away are ones I see as incongruent with the inclusionary love throughout Jesus narratives that have always resonated with me; therefore, my eventual resignation and departure is better understood as stemming from convictions of my faith rather than as a loss of faith. I do not write from the position of a sceptical humanist, nor of a practicing evangelical, but rather from a place outside of both. I approach the data from a 'paradoxical state of overlap between engagement and scepticism', what Coleman describes as 'revealing the kind of space where ethnography can locate itself' (Coleman 2015: 295).

I was born into the Assemblies of God. My mother was an ordained children's minister whose father was a pastor and mother a traveling evangelist. My father served as a tithe paying lay member who volunteered his own construction skills when needed and helped my mother in children's church. As a child, I would listen to the church planting exploits of my grandparents on my mother's side and my father's boasting about the church buildings they had built in service to the Pentecostal expansion in America. For my family, church and our relationship to God was the most important activity in our lives. We spent no less than four nights per week attending some sort of Christian meeting. All of my childhood and adolescent friends were from church.

It was at a church camp as a 12-year-old that I, along with all of my closest friends, was called by God to be a missionary. The experience was a convincing thought that passed through my mind as I prayed. I was sure that God's purpose for my life was to serve as a missionary to India. India was the deemed location perhaps because the speaker that week was a missionary to India. When I arrived back home, I told my parents who, along with all of those in our social group, celebrated the 'call' that was considered the highest expression of service to God. During the formative years of my life, I became a true believer and never questioned my call, eventually attending an AG university after high school. I enrolled in Anthropology (rather than missions or theology) at the suggestion of my youth pastor who told me that because India was closed to missionaries, it was better to get a secular degree that would enable me to have creative (i.e. deceptive) visa access to India someday. After completing the requirements, including a two-year stint as a senior pastor at a church in the USA, missionary training, and raising financial support from USA churches to cover the cost of my venture, I was cleared to go to India under the AG umbrella. It was 1999 when I boarded a plane with my wife and two young children to Delhi followed by a van ride to a hill station in the North. After taking classes at a local language school, I began to work with another AG missionary in the northwest Himalayas where very few Christian churches were established. As a result, our work was extremely entrepreneurial and consisted of hiring Indian church planters, starting ministry training schools, and establishing children's homes, all completely dependent upon our ability to raise funds for them from USA churches. We engaged locals directly, mostly on trekking adventures in which we, along with a team of Indian workers, would go village to village and preach and pray for the people who lived there.

It was very soon that I became uncomfortable with the nature of our work. I began to challenge my colleague and leadership about many of our approaches, particularly the

practice of taking children from their parents in the hopes of converting them, turning them into pastors, and sending them back to their villages. I was uncomfortable with these proselytizing encounters, including telling families that unless they converted they would go to hell. I remember a Hindu villager pointing to the pictures on his wall of his father and grandfather draped in flowers and saying, 'it is impossible that the story you are telling me is true because it has come too late and my father and grandfather never had the chance to become Christian'. His mood was understandably one of anger given that the implications of my message were that these two men that he loved and venerated were at this moment and forever suffering in hell. These encounters caused me to withdraw from eager participation, and I began to rethink the meanings of the Jesus stories and search for new life grounding. This quest strained my relationships with my colleagues. I eventually decided to resign from my AG missionary status and started my own non-profit, pursuing a more ethical approach to at-risk children and chronically poor communities. The author of this study is an insider, no longer inside, who became an outsider, but not fully out. I am neither a committed Christian apologist attempting to hide my bias in academic objectivity, nor a faithless and angry former missionary. This study is written from a decentred, perhaps liminal, social position.

I am writing in a time where this sort of insider research perhaps benefits from a post-modern turn that has exposed the fallacy of objective inquiry in general. In a response to Susan Harding's claim that Christians constitute, for many anthropologists, a 'repugnant cultural other' (Harding 1991), Brian Howell argues that 'Christianity is a subject position analogous to other committed subject positions outside androcentric, enlightenment modernity (e.g. feminism). As such, the Christian voice should be welcomed and encouraged in the academy as a valuable ethnographic perspective' (2007: 371). I have formed

impressions and opinions about the North Indian context, Indian churches, and the AG missionary effort over the years that shape the outcome of this work.

At various points, my analysis of missionaries may appear to be excessively critical, the kind of straightforwardness only expected from a friend. I am also likely overly generous or amiable to the global missionary story when it results in bringing hope to people stuck in multigenerational oppression. My biggest concern is the relational risk associated with researching as an insider (Mosse 2005: 12) given that some of the AG missionaries and clergy, many of whom are former colleagues and friends, may not agree with my descriptions to come.

However, it is important to point out that according to an unpublished internal survey of AG missionaries, nearly 90 per cent came to faith during adolescence or earlier and most felt called into missionary service before they reached their twenties. This means that most, like me, grew up in a culture that values above all else missionary service. They are good people willing to travel across the globe, learn a new language, and live among North Indians. These may or may not be acts of pure altruism since they do enjoy social benefits and sometimes an improvement of lifestyle, yet they do sacrifice being away from their families. They do not come to colonize as actors of aggression, but they believe that lost Indians will spend eternity in hell, therefore, not going to make converts would be to not care. They also are widely known for their work of helping the poor through medicine, education, and disaster relief. Modern missionaries are far from interested in oppressing members of the global south, and, instead, come to empower and bring a message of eternal salvation.

Anthropology of Christianity

Bielo (2013) points towards various comparative projects that have been undertaken within the Anthropology of Christianity, including the development of local and global connections in Christian communities (Robbins 2003), day-to-day and transcendental experience (Robbins 2003), the nature of conversion (Robbins 2007), linkages between Christianity and modernity (Cannell 2006), and Christian ideologies and meaning (Keane 2007; Engelke and Tomlinson 2006).

In his 2004 review article 'The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity', Joel Robbins set out the major questions and contributions related to this sub-field. I take up several of these following three more recent ethnographies of Christianity in India, including David Mosse's *The Saint in the Banyan Tree* (2012) that describes Christianity's impact on Tamil Nadu and India from the 17th century to Mosse's latest field research in 2004, Vibha Joshi's *A Matter of Belief* (2012) that explores continuity and change among the *Angami Naga* of Northeast India, and Nathaniel Roberts' recent research on Pentecostal conversion in Chennai and Mumbai slums (2013, 2016) which concludes that conversion facilitates the integration of a slum community by addressing hidden moral fault lines that pit residents against each other. All three of these studies explore central questions to the Anthropology of Christianity including questions around caste and culture change, conversion and anti-conversion of political Hinduism, and the social struggle of the marginalized or Dalit political protest.

This study explores the AG as global social and economic phenomenon. These frames neatly fit both the scope of the research and exchanges between the participants. The AG global network is an example of the globalization of Pentecostalism that does not

just represent a cognitive cultural system or set of ideas, but real physical and material engagement of rituals, media, linguistics, and aspects of the wider society (Coleman 2000).

Friedman argued that global anthropology began in the 1970s as the meeting between the study of society and global realities (2007). The idea of social reproduction as a framework entered, centring on the social as existing within processes of production and consumption. This then became perceived as a cultural process. Moving from utilizing social reproduction-based frameworks to globalized anthropology was, as he describes, a matter of understanding the resources that facilitate the reproduction of a population, and whether these are local or part of larger or regional relationships and processes. As Friedman says, 'the world is now one place, there is a world culture' (2007: 111). The AG world culture is not a homogeneous bounded whole. It is a series of relational connections that have formed around an affiliation as well as shared values and the central mission of saving the lost. The measure of success is the multiplication and expansion of local churches. The local connection to the global system is a negotiation of sorts, and the AG global culture is attuned at facilitating the desires of each part of the saved soul production chain.

In this view, global refers to the environment within which social reproduction occurs, and the global systemic refers to the cycles of global social reproduction and how these relate to institutional, economic, and political processes. As Friedman argues, the local is part of the global, but is not always produced by the global, which is the set of processes that connects localities. Global systemic anthropology is, therefore, anthropological study that seeks to understand how the logics of social reproduction contextualize rituals and every-day life (Friedman 2007).

Economic Frameworks

In the case of the Assemblies of God, material economic engagement is at the forefront of the globalization. The budgets of American protestant missionaries in 2008 reached 5.7 billion USD (44 billion GBP) with three quarters of church attenders reportedly supporting a missionary (Bauman 2015: 135). Using economic exchange frameworks may be necessary to tell the story of a missionary effort in an age of economic globalization.

Anthropologists have used economic frameworks to analyze Pentecostal prosperity exchange logics, including the connection between religious ideology and global capitalism/globalization more generally (see Coleman 2015: 27). Van Dijk interprets prosperity gospel practices as a sort of training for neo-liberal market participation and consumerism (2009). Bernice Martin explores resulting self-discipline as helpful for negotiating changing labour conditions (1995). Other treatments include the categorization of Pentecostalism as an 'occult econom[y]' in which a magic logic is employed to explain failed outcomes (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999), and analysis of the prosperity exchange as sacrifice (Coleman 2015; Bialecki 2008). Naomi Haynes connects prosperity gospel teaching where 'seed' offerings to God are both a 'sacrificial offering' that places God in debt to the giver, but also 'socially productive' in that they connect givers across classes which she calls 'ties to reach up' (2013: 88).

Using an economic framework represents a departure from theoretical frameworks used in recent accounts of Christianity in India including those used by Mosse, Joshi, and Roberts. By analyzing and theorizing the Assemblies of God as a global network of exchange, my aim is to advance discourse within the Anthropology of Christianity by conceptualizing the Pentecostal missionary enterprise as a global exchange network. I cast the missionary venture as a series of exchanges between donors, missionaries, Indian

pastors, lay leaders, converts, and seeking Hindus. This enables a behavioural exploration of the influence of power and reveals how relational and intersubjective spaces as well as culturally embedded rationalism act to motivate missionaries, converts, and donors. I uncover exchanges by actors that are guided, in part, by holistic values but are mostly negotiations that reflect individual socio-economic mobility.

AG Network of Exchange

Anthropological approaches have adopted alternative economic theories, such as gift exchange (economic exchanges embedded in social relations and reciprocity) and commodity exchange (goods are exchanged for money), while for the most part, avoiding the application of broader neoclassical economic theories (which centre around market forces driving production and consumption). In this study I theorize proselytization, social inclusion, affective rituals, and the aid/development efforts of the church as marketing and sales. I theorize conversion as consumption. Lastly, I theorize the missionary enterprise as the commoditization of conversion.

Anthropologists have sought to understand the economics of Christianity in the west. In his study of the 'Word of Life' prosperity gospel movement in Sweden, Coleman uses Mauss (1990) to describe how giving expands both the giver's agency and the giver's actual self (2004, 2006). Elisha, too, shows how acts of community services are valued amongst evangelicals in the American South (2004). Others draw attention to how materialism provides a means through which Christians express faith (Hendershot 2004; McDannell 1995). Harding describes how donating to Christian political leaders and televangelists allows participants to engage with larger cosmological processes and break away from traditional forms of religious discipline (1992).

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Bialecki's study of a charismatic Vineyard church in Southern California uses the anthropological spheres of exchange theory to understand economic practices within the church. He identifies three spheres, secular exchange, stewardship, and sacrifice, which are related but have different assumptions for morality. These differing assumptions in large part create dual support for and adversity against consumerism and materialism (Bialecki 2008). Exchange theory provides a framework that can be used as, Bialecki's words, 'some way of thinking through this multiplicity of transactional terms, of sacrifice, morality, personhood, that allows all the contours of the field to come into a graspable relation at the same moment' (Bialecki 2008: 377).

Anthropologists have organized exchange into different types and levels, as seen in Levi-Strauss's exchange of words, goods, and people (1963) and Bohannan's hierarchically organized spheres of exchange describing the Tiv economy (1955). Exchange has also been related to geographical and social distance (Sahlins 1972; Munn 1986). The effect of money on exchange systems has been described as detrimental to traditional exchange (Bohannan 1955, 1959) and as becoming part of the logic of exchange in some societies (Parry and Bloch 1989).

My argument is that the AG missionary enterprise is not a sacred cultural area set apart or singular that resists commoditization (Kopytoff 1996: 73). I argue that although gospel 'truths' theoretically exist in a sacred space (Durkheim 1971), in the case of AG missions, they act as tradable bundles of goods. These objects of value 'exist in the space between pure desire and immediate enjoyment, with some distance between them' so that valued commodities can be understood when this 'distance is overcome in and through economic exchange, in which the value of objects is determined reciprocally. That is, one's desire for an object is fulfilled by the sacrifice of some other object, which is the focus of the

desire of another' (Appadurai 1996: 3). I argue that the global missionary and local proselytizing effort can be understood as an exchange of sacrifices.

The spheres of exchange concept has been utilized within economic anthropology to understand trade and exchange. It has notably been used by Bohannan to describe the exchange of goods within certain spheres, which had their own forms of money, amongst the Tiv in Nigeria (1959) and Geertz's dual economy in Indonesia (1963). Scott's description of a moral economy describes traditional spheres of exchange that pose resistance to new markets (1976). Spheres of exchange are also used to understand gift economies (Parry and Bloch 1989).

Bialecki (2008) summarizes the key components of exchange theories, noting that exchange spheres have their own organising logics that control how exchange is carried out, which goods are exchanged, and who participates in exchanges (Robbins and Akin 1999). Additionally, spheres exist separately, but they are also linked. Exchanges usually occur within a sphere, but sometimes goods and relationships that facilitate exchange spill over from one sphere to another (Bohannan 1955). This 'allow[s] a transvaluation not just of goods, but of relationships and moral evaluation as well' (Bialecki 2008: 377), which Bialecki points out, is also how evangelical Christians view their own faith (2008).

In this study I explore two spheres of exchange. The two conversion exchanges that I describe are relational exchanges. This is not unlike a marital or other relational exchange where converts enter a sort of covenant or contractual agreement with the pastor and other participants of the church. The exchange is not mediated by material benefits, but rather the relational commitment and set of promised outcomes given by God, which is tied to propositional commitments, ethical, and participation in rituals.

The missionaries operate in a second sphere that I argue represents a commoditization of the successful conversion stories. In this sphere, the exchange is mediated by money, including the evaluation of goods on offer and maximizing benefits. Since commodities are the result of social meaning and values in that things 'have no meanings apart from those that human transactions, attributions, and motivations endow them with' (Appadurai 1996: 5), we can imagine knowledge and ritual in terms of a tradable or exchangeable good, or socially-produced object, in relationship to subjects that endow it with value. AG knowledge is packaged into bundles of meaning that are valued and exchanged, and as such these can be defined as commodities. Because missionaries value eternal escape and salvation from hell, they commoditize the gospel as stories of missionary conquest and lost Hindus who now have saved souls. I call this commodity Saved Soul Stories (SSS). Missionaries tell these stories to donors in exchange for donations that capitalize the missionary enterprise.

I explore these two spheres of exchange that link AG participants who receive social, economic, and spiritual or eternal rewards in exchange for social, economic, and ethical payments. In the first case, converts receive earthly and heavenly rewards based upon levels of participation, stewardship, and sacrifice. In the second, stewardship and sacrifice are linked to the great commission goal of reaching the world and the earthly, social and eternal rewards missionaries and donors will receive by giving financially. Consumption can be seen, on the one hand, as humans meeting their basic needs, and on the other, as occurring within specific niches and patterns of consumption (Sahlins 1972; Guthman 2008; Miller 1998). In the AG, the logic of consumption is, for the donor, the eternal damnation of the lost, and for the convert is the real-life struggle for social inclusion and security. These complex relational dynamics and exchanges are guided by globally produced cultural

ontologies and value hierarchies tied to AG the core doctrinal ideology that lost people need salvation and that the AG mediates salvation.

Rationality?

I assume that all decision-making is embedded within this set of shared categories and value hierarchies, or a culture. Shared logics can be assumed in the subjects of this study given that their lives are situated within urban settings and a globalized economy (Prattis 1973; Granovetter 1985). They are part of the AG global culture that is part of a wider economic globalization. And within the global landscape there have emerged power hierarchies that also must be theorized. So, I employ perspectives based upon Marx's 'political economy' (Marx and Engels 1987), the 'formalist' views that emphasizes economizing, maximization, utility and rational choice and 'substantivism' that emphasizes socio-culturally embedded livelihood strategies (Polanyi 1968). I conceptualize individuals as rational actors who seek to maximize, rather than reduce, utility (Simon 1955). I use 'rational' only in the broadest terms to mean actors making decisions by 'trying to get a good deal'. I recognize that what is valued (conversion, heaven, spiritual inventions, eternal rewards) is embedded in specific culture logics. So, I also analyze choice by expanding upon emic values and viewing the maximization as embedded in these values. In this way, I lean towards 'substantivist' approaches (Polanyi 1968) that argue against a straightforward application of the rational choice model. Conversion, missionary service, and donor capitalization all represent a negotiation between human actors and God, whose reciprocations or are the promises of the Holy Spirits provision and protection as outlined in the logics of AG doctrine.

In addition to exploring the exchanges from the logics of AG ideology, I will also engage Dumont's classic Homo Hierarchicus (1980). Haynes and Hickel point out that there are at least two ways two approach Dumont's work; his explanation of the caste system and his theories of value hierarchies. Value, as a noun, is something like a conception of good (Haynes and Hickel 2016) within a culture.

More to the point in comparing AG values with Indian values is how these values are expressed as religious ideology and how they result in actions that are sensible or rational according. There has been a tentative push to include a theological perspective into Anthropology with some Christian anthropologists claiming that 'anthropology's exclusion of religious thought from its discourse is at odds with a public that is largely composed of people with religious commitments' (Meneses et al. 2014). In bringing theological elements into the discussion, I am not attempting to blend them with anthropological inquiry, but, rather, I consider theological elements as ethnographic objects (Carroll 2017) and as a source of data that provides insight into the mind-sets and motivations of the subjects of the study (Robbins 2013).

Dumont has set out a holism versus individualism comparison of preferred values in the west. I will discuss cooperation as an expression of the value of holism and then likewise competition as an expression of individualism. The evidence is that the AG is driven by a combination of these varied conceptions of good grounded in their religious ideology. These values combine in the social construction of personhood and inform rational and sensible decision-making. I will argue that the conception of good in the ideology of both Indian and Christian AG Pentecostals includes the individual and the whole, egalitarianism and hierarchy, cooperation and competition. On the one hand, they value the individual and believe that humans are made in the image of God, with unique gifts stratified by Holy Spirit charisma and wealth, equally available to all, the Spirit poured out on all flesh, and justice.

But they also value holism, expressed hierarchically and in acts of cooperation: generosity, considering others, and even laying down your life for another.

Robbins' careful unpacking of Dumont's structural theoretical framework is helpful in untangling this web. Dumont argues that caste, a phenomenon codified in Hinduism, flows from a pervasive ideology of holism whereby each individual finds their value in how they serve the whole of society. To him, 'the caste system is above all a system of ideas and values, a formal comprehensible, rational system, a system in the intellectual sense of the term' (Dumont 1980: 35).[10] Dumont does not claim that 'individualism' and 'holism' represent discrete kinds of societies in which one or the other exclusively governs life, but rather are always found in some combination. Robbins points out that Dumont's view is of the 'essentially limited nature of individualism as a socially realized value' that does not 'completely banish holism', but rather exists as a complex reality of 'hierarchal dynamism'. He argues that we should look for 'divergent developments of values' that share a commitment to holism (Robbins 2015: 174).

Another way of thinking about individualism and holism, beyond resulting in egalitarian and hierarchical societies as Dumont has argued, is the more general production of relational praxis of competition versus cooperation. In focusing on individualism expressed as competition and holism as cooperation, Robbins' formulation might be used as follows. AG ideology seems to produce a limited socially realized value of holism marked by cooperation that is unable to suppress individualism marked by competition. I argue that this results in Indian AG Pentecostals who value the whole, accepting a role within the body of Christ (perfect holism metaphor), and diligently welcoming and helping each other toward socioeconomic embitterment. Yet, they also value individualism, taking on new non-caste

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[10] There have been others before Dumont, such as Bouglé (1958), Ghurye (1950), Leach (1969), Marriot (1976), and subsequently, Beck (1970), Milner (1994), and Moffat (1979) among others, who would concur with Dumont's general position.

identities, and embracing individual mobility.

Likewise, missionaries are on one hand concerned with the whole of mankind, displayed in a willingness to sacrifice even to the point of death in order to secure the salvation of others, and yet also highly competitive with each other. They are individual agents who compete for the scarce resources of funding, social recognition, and eternal rewards to come. What emerges in both cases is a hierarchal structure where individual mobility (Indians) and achievements (missionaries) are celebrated. Yet, these are tempered by holism. Individual mobility and achievements are understood as the uplift of the whole (Indians) and completing the shared mission of saving the world (missionaries). Indians and missionaries are, then, not wholly distinct kinds of societies and display a global culture. Their divergent expressions share a fundamental commitment to holism and cooperation, yet also individualism and completion, a sort of 'hierarchal dynamism' (Robbins 2015: 176; Dumont 1984).

Research Questions

Success of Global Pentecostalism

The central question that I address is, what are the causes of the expansion of the AG globally? The success of Pentecostalism more generally has been previously explained as a result of the attraction of converts to time-consuming, 'high-intensity' rituals, doctrines of millennial hope, and egalitarian participatory gatherings by lower caste/class rural migrants who are 'displaced and decentred' in urban settings (Robbins 2004b: 123)[11] Pentecostalism is especially attractive to the disenfranchised and marginalized given its promise of eternal

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[11] E.g. Martin 1990, Anderson 1979, D'Epinay 1969, Willems 1967.

hope to all. Pentecostalism is driven by these millennial hope doctrines (Cox 1995) that are reproduced locally in a variety of forms (Annis 1987)[12] and the belief that anyone, not just trained clergy, can be empowered and should be responsible for evangelistic activities (Willems 1967). Pentecostalism's egalitarian structure is also thought to provide a new and attractive identity to previously marginalized converts (Synan 1997), and Pentecostal rituals are argued to be appealing given their experiential, participatory meetings, and exciting worship (Corten 1999).[13]

I argue that the expansion of the AG globally is accounted for in three exchanges in which culturally embedded actors negotiate toward relational connections, social production, expansion of new churches, and growth within existing churches. I describe two exchanges that happen locally. First, prospective converts are offered social inclusion and promises of healing and wellbeing, or the Made Pure Embrace (MPE) in exchange for participation. After years of participation, a form of prosperity gospel offers a Safe Secure Future (SSF) in exchange for authentic conversion, which is marked by high levels of commitment, including ethical and moral requirements such as, most prominently, leaving Hinduism completely.

A third exchange between donors and two main groups, missionaries and Indian clergy in return for financial support, capitalizes the project. I am calling this the Saved Soul Stories, or SSS exchange. Missionaries and Indian clergy use these funds for their ministries, other social programs, and their own salaries and personal budgets. Missionaries package stories of Indian conversions and other ministerial successes in reports and accounts of activities to be appealing to donors in U.S. churches. This process largely mirrors the global economic production and sale of other commodities.

This is in line with Coleman's (2000) observation that the global culture of Christianity

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[12] E.g. Bowen 1996, Chesnut 1997, Kamsteeg 1998, Lehmann 2001: 63.
[13] E.g. Brouwer et al. 1996: 179, Burdick 1993.

is shaped by a 'multi-dimensional yet culturally specific sense of reaching out into an unbounded realm of action and identity' (2000: 6). Engagement in this movement allows adherence to perceive of themselves as contributors to global Christianity. As Coleman describes, this results in 'an ultimate reality where global and spiritual transcendence of the self become mutually reinforcing, even mutually constitutive, activities' (2000: 6).

This is a form of Christianized global capitalism where the means of production is privately owned, workers sell labour, and surpluses are used to make profit or reinvest into production. In the Assemblies of God, AG global corporate affiliated bodies the Assemblies of God, USA and Assemblies of God of North India (AGNI) own the means of production. Missionaries and clergy sell their 'labour' to make and distribute products (convert stories) to U.S. donors. Converts are compelled by the prosperity gospel promises made compelling by the relational embrace, spiritual experiences, and socio-economic uplift as other benefits realized in church participation. Profit is recognized at each point in the chain by lower castes who experience upward social mobility, missionaries who experience increase in quality of life, fame and 'power' within the international AG organisation, and USA donors who receive increased spiritual and heavenly rewards for their charity.

Why do Hindus Convert?

A related question is, what compels Hindu's to convert to Christianity? There is a rich body of anthropological literature that attempts to explain why people convert in India and the appeal of Pentecostalism in the face of anti-conversion efforts of religious and political Hindu ideology known as Hindutva. Conversion in India has been understood by Robinson as a 'fluid process' (Robinson and Clarke 2003) and by Viswanathan as a 'cultural critique' (1998, cf. Kent 2004) with the possibility of being a social movement or social critique in relation to

the Indian Dalit struggle. It has also been theorized as an adaptation to imperialism by Kooiman (1989) and as emancipation by Gladstone (1984). Most anthropological Indian conversion explanations appear to question religious legitimacy by explaining mostly pragmatic forces rather than true conviction (Robinson and Clarke 2003), while true conviction, however that may be defined, is most often the explanation adopted by church clergy and missionaries.

Joel Robbins has forwarded a two-stage explanation that employs both the classic anthropological 'utilitarian' and 'intellectualist'[14] theoretical approaches by placing them in sequential order. He argues that the 'utilitarian' approach is useful in understanding first order motivation for conversion to missionary Christianity in the face of other modernizing forces, but poor at explaining how Christianity continues to thrive in later generations. Likewise, the 'intellectualist' approach is better at explaining the on-going cultural reproduction of Christianity, yet weak at explaining original conversions (2004a: 87).

Recent treatments in India include Mosse who takes a utilitarian view, calling conversion 'performative' for political advantage, and Joshi who concludes that motivations include rational choice or other utilitarian advantages wherein the new religion offers a 'better deal' which 'will itself vary according to needs, wants, and what is provided, but indicates the undeniable pragmatic aspect of many such choices, involving perhaps improved educational or biomedical access and entitlement' (2012: 7). Moreover, Joshi makes room for 'genuinely felt emotional responses, such as the pull of spiritual intensity and performativity of prayer in one church as against another' (2012: 8). With respect to individual choices, he concludes, 'the support offered by the various church organizations, their sometimes varying liturgies, the relative attractiveness of their modes of worship, and

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[14] The 'utilitarian approach [explains] conversion primarily in terms of worldly advantages' and the 'intellectualist' approach 'holds that people convert to Christianity because they see it to offer satisfactory answers to existential questions of meaning' (Keller 2006: 291).

interpersonal influences thus variously occur as factors in conversion and in changing allegiance from one sect to another' (2012: 8). These varying possible motives for conversion should not be taken, according to Joshi, as 'separable motives' for 'the viability of a religious system generally depends on motivations remaining mutually embedded and opaque, lest belief be reduced to challengeable propositions' (2012: 8). His view is that conversion 'may sometimes be taken to imply change from one absolute state to another, or it may be regarded as fragmentary and full of stops, starts, reverses, advances, contraction and outreach' (2012: 7).

Roberts argues that Hindus convert because they adopt new knowledge based upon evidence. He provides an illuminating ethnographic example from his fieldwork.

> 'When I challenged Mohan, as I have so many others like him, to justify his conversion to a western religion, he reacted in a typical manner by rejecting the premise that Christianity could be meaningfully described as 'western'. Though it was common knowledge that Christianity originated in western Asia, Mohan explained, and that it was only recently spread throughout India by Europeans, he dismissed the idea that there was anything essentially western about it. 'Do [people who reject Christianity as foreign] also reject tube lights because they come from the West?' he laughed, 'do they refuse to believe in airplanes? No! These things belong to everyone'. Christianity could not be western, according to Mohan, because it was true – and therefore could never be the property of any one people or place. Like other Pentecostals I interacted with, Mohan understood his relationship to Christian teachings not as the assent to a culturally-specific value system, but as the recognition of verifiable truth. The reason they converted to Christianity, my interlocutors explained, was because they realized the Christian god was the 'true god' – the only god who actually exists and the only one, therefore, that is capable of helping them in their lives' (2012: 278).

I attempt to build on Roberts and attend to the specific compelling features that serve to move Hindus through a relational two-stage process that initially offers social inclusion in exchange for participation followed by, sometimes much later, authentic conversion in exchange for social and economic security.

I argue that three compelling factors compel converts toward stage one participation or belonging. First, they are compelled by their own hardships to seek out pragmatic remedies. This drive toward mobility is especially pressing as a result of their urban experiences and effects of global capitalism including new hierarchies of consumption and neo-liberal economic policies. According to Naomi Haynes, Pentecostalism is 'part of the set of ontological, social, and epistemological resources that people in urban Zambia draw on to create lives and livelihoods in the face of social and economic uncertainty' (2013: 93).

Second, the localized prosperity gospel of the AG in India is shaped toward the desires of social inclusion into a middle-class social group as upward mobility and socio-economic security. These promises and social embrace are freely provided though the enthusiastic welcome that chronically poor and low caste Hindus receive without demands of offerings or requirements that they leave Hinduism straight away. I argue that Hindus, especially Dalits, are attracted to a gospel knowledge that emphasises God's grace, love, and acceptance of all people. This includes the washing, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and a health and wealth message of prosperity in which God blesses the faithful.

Third, most converts have existing relational connections and quickly develop relationships with the pastors. Pastors serve as symbolic replacements of Hindu religious practitioner counterparts and icons of worship. These relationships smooth the transition into Pentecostal religious practice.

The second exchange is where participants agree to full conversion and leave their old life. It is made compelling by two sets of experiences. First, is the affective power of AG rituals where the Holy Spirit is experienced, and the promises of the gospel are rendered plausible. Second, the economic development activities of local congregations lead to socio-economic improvement of the group as they help each other. This is a culturally embedded

rational process that follows from a first order relational and social process. Converts are invited to participate in Pentecostal community and, after understanding and experiencing evidence of the effects of belonging to such a community, accept AG truth.

Overall, the Indian situation mirrors Haynes' finding in the Zambian Copperbelt. Indian churches provide economic and social opportunities that remedy poverty and social exclusion resulting from neoliberal economic policies and hierarchy based on consumption. It is not a precursor to economic globalization, but rather, it is a response to it.

Conversion Careers

In addition to addressing the global growth of Pentecostalism and motivations for conversion, I also attend to the typical steps in the process of conversion in the stories that I heard. The conversion career approach is useful to describe the various, multiple separate elements of the process rather than trying to capture it as a single act. Moving from participation to baptism is a multi-year, multiple, and variable process. [15] Gooren's synthesized version is composed of five 'levels of religious activity' that include 'pre-affiliation' (life prior to conversion), 'affiliation' (formal membership in the church, sometimes baptized, but without change of identity), 'conversion' (a radical change of identity and commitment), 'confession' (evangelistic vocal outside as well as inside the church), and 'disaffiliation' (2010: 50). The first exchange of MPE for participation would include pre-affiliation and affiliation without baptism. In the Indian context, this act would follow and codify 'conversion' and 'confession' that correspond to the second exchange of Safe Secure Future for authentic conversion. For all of the first generation converts that I interviewed, the conversion experience was a lengthy process (Joshi 2012; Lofland and Stark 1965) and not

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[15] This is similar to what Joshi describes in reference to North East India (Joshi 2012).

a singular event. Garma concludes that any account must factor in 'disbelief' in Hinduism (Robbins 2007: 21) or the process of 'opting out' (Oddie 1997). Some have suggested that the failure of traditional religion leading to conversion is a Dalit and feminist political critique (Mosse 2012, Viswanathan 1998) and necessarily also accounts for disbelief or rejection of Hinduism. Roberts describes conversion as a 'leap of faith' from one security system to another. This is because, according to him, Christianity becomes the convert's 'sole safety net' and 'requires them to be unfaithful to their customary gods and thereby open themselves to very serious reprisals' (Roberts 2012: 284).

I argue that the conversion process is a slow, careful, and thoughtful journey. In this regard, I depart from Roberts' description of a 'leap of faith' and describe something like a one-limb-at-a-time negotiation across the transition from an old regime of knowledge and security to the new. It is marked by two stages of exchange in which converts first belong and then, after a long period of secret participation where they continue to practice Hinduism, fully believe, leave Hinduism, and convert.

Power and Exchange

This thesis addresses the question, how does power manifest in the proselytizing mission? Anthropologists analyzing missionary proselytization and conversion of marginalized groups have focused on geopolitical and economic hegemony using tropes like the 'colonization of consciousness' and 'rice Christian' respectively. Using economic theoretical tools and engaging with neo-Marxist anthropological theories, I run the risk of being lumped in with others who have explained conversion in purely pragmatic terms and cast the missionary as the oppressor and convert as the coerced and oppressed.

Grounded in the liberal positioning that all religions are equally false, these renderings assume that the only possible set of reasons for conversion would be pragmatic and not a matter of faith or new discovery. In this view, conversion is a conquest wherein the powerful and wealthy exploit the poor by exerting control and manipulating the helpless or the ignorant exchange one false faith for another in search of money. It portrays the poor of India as ignorantly falling into the missionary trap. The historical events associated with both the terms 'rice Christian' and 'colonization' were expressions of oppressive force and coercion. Using these pejoratives to describe the conversion process reduces a complicated series of motivations and factors with a blunt force power rubric that does not always fit.

I would agree with how Haynes describes a 'rice Christian' phenomenon in which Christianity offers practical benefits to participants. These include the promise of divine healing (which is especially attractive to participants who cannot afford medical care), transactional connections, and social relationships (2016). Arguments around the motivations for human action exist prominently in classic social contract theory. Hobbes argued that human action can be entirely explained materialistically and is motivated by selfish concern. He argues, therefore, humans should contract with a sovereign power to enforce laws and maintain order (1651).

Yet, there are historical examples of missionaries distributing food in times of famine and severe deprivation hand and hand with their proselytizing efforts. The motivations of the converts are rightly questioned as purely pragmatic and the actions of the missionaries as exploitive in these cases. Such practices directly go against AG missionary values and understandings of the process. Missionaries are trained to be aware of 'rice Christian' phenomena and also use the term pejoratively as a warning against inauthentic conversions. In his study of Calvinist missionaries in Dutch Indonesia, Keane argues that sincerity is crucial to the idea of the ideal Christian. Sincerity unites cultural ideals of morality

and truth (2007). I am stretching Keane's concept of modern ideologies based in purity to point out that missionaries and Indian pastors are keenly interested in authentic conversions.

AG missionaries do not offer food, hospital care, or school admissions in exchange for water baptism and converts do not abandon their families and communities in exchange for such. Rather, missionaries and pastors, at least the ones of this study, are careful not to induce, coerce, or in any way spoil a convert's decision to follow Christ. I also found no evidence from convert stories of a direct line between socio-economic inducements and conversion and mostly agree with Shah that explaining conversion as 'driven by material or instrumental benefits, that converts are merely "rice Christians"' is 'wholly inaccurate' (2016: 110).

The second trope, coined by Comaroff and Comaroff, cast missionaries as colonizers of consciousness (1992) and converts as helpless. Colonization of consciousness directly connects the modern missionary effort to the geopolitical power imbalance that led to western colonial forces conquering and exploiting resource wealthy countries. Rather, my analysis most closely aligns with the conclusions of Nathaniel Roberts' study of Pentecostal conversion in urban Tamil slums. Roberts challenges the anthropological and Hindutva concept of 'conversion-as-conquest' and argues that though power is at work, the 'converts' active participation in an on-going process of discovery' (2012: 272). His research points to what he calls shifts in 'regimes of subjectivity' (2012: 273) against the commonly accepted narrative of violence over Indian subjects by colonizers or missionaries. Roberts argues that 'subjectivities are always formed by one or another regime of power relations' (2012: 276). He understands conversion 'not as the subordination of a previously autonomous subject but as a movement of persons from one subjectifying regime to another' in which 'converts subject themselves to new cosmological narratives,

meanings, regulations and powers' and not so narrowly defined as 'the subordination of a previously autonomous subject' (2012: 276). Roberts points out that his respondents see no incongruity between Christianity and their own sense of self, and that they come to Christianity by weighing the evidence and concluding that it is true and useful knowledge that can be applied to their socially and economically insecure lives. Roberts therefore challenges the colonization narrative but provides an open and comparative analysis of why and how Hindus are 'pried away' from traditional regimes and how the new regime compares to the traditional (2012: 276).

Anthropologists have often sided with Hindu nationalists in seeing the conversion process as neo-colonizing and conquering (Roberts 2012). Yet the AG missionary effort which promotes local leadership and power structures following their 'indigenous church principles' does not fit the colonizing narrative. The only example of what might be considered colonizing that I found in the AG of India are bible colleges, where students who are indoctrinated into AG knowledge and prepared for ministry often come from socio-economic situations in which there are few alternative career choices.

However, this does not mean that power is not at work. I will further explore the power dynamics of conversion and how the ordered emphasis of paradoxical truths which attract and then demand payment from converts undoes any claim of conversion as a free gift of salvation. Asad's claim that 'It is not mere symbols that implant true Christian dispositions, but power-ranging all the way from laws (imperial and ecclesiastical) and other sanctions (hellfire, death, salvation, peace) to disciplinary activities of social institutions (family, school, city, church) and human bodies (fasting, prayer, penance)' and that 'It was not the mind that moved spontaneously to religious thrush, but power that created the condition for experiences' (1993: 35) well captures how AG truth taking effect is a bait and switch appeal that invites Hindus in free of charge, but, at some point, the trap is sprung and

a new regime takes hold. AG laity and clergy lure new converts in with promises of blessing, healing, and financial provision, and then demand complete separation from Hinduism and high levels of commitment.

Ethics of the Missionary Enterprise

This leads me to a final related question. Is the missionary enterprise ethical? It could be argued that this question belongs to a theological or missiological debate, not an anthropological one. However, as far as I have encountered, there is no such debate within the AG or other evangelical circles. Rather, it is a debate spawned by the opposition. Hindu nationalists overtly, and some anthropologists more subtly, imply that the conversion mission is an unethical intrusion on equally valid cultural-religious faiths. I use two theories to evaluate the MPE and SSF conversion exchanges along ethical lines. The first is Graeber's categories of the moral principles that guide the relations and the nature of societies. The second is Sandel's questions around the morality of the commoditization of certain things. Graeber suggests that three principles are at play in reciprocal relations. 'Communism' is the morality captured by the Marxian phrase 'from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs' (2011: 98). Graeber calls the second morality 'exchange' theorized as reciprocal gift exchange. Although exchanges are not always exact or immediate and often mediated by money, morality dictates a reciprocation of similar or same value. The third morality he calls 'hierarchy' where 'precedent' rather than reciprocity dictate relations (ibid). Graeber's three principles of reciprocal relations ('communism', 'exchange', and 'hierarchy') are helpful when exploring power relations at work in the conversion process.

The first stage of conversion exchange (social embrace for participation only)

appears to be an example of 'communism' in which the benefits of being part of the AG church community are afforded by only requiring reciprocation according to the abilities of new participants (Graeber 2011). As far as the second exchange, there is ambiguity between how faithful proponents and opponents would characterize the reciprocal relation. If one accepts that Dalit converts really do receive eternal life in heaven and significant socioeconomic uplift, the required break from the past would be considered a fair 'exchange' in which converts realize near or equal value, indeed perhaps much more, for their sacrifices. However, if one doesn't believe in eternal benefits, then Graeber's 'hierarchy' is a better descriptor. Here, a logic of precedent prevails in which the subjected are expected to sacrifice without realizing benefits (2011). Believers and non-believers will never agree on the ethics of conversion unless the promises of the gospel and the benefits of social inclusion are given freely, without conversion rupture or sacrificial ritual requirements. So, we are left with a stalemate of first principles where one's conclusions are necessarily tied to an underlying view of reality.

I use a second tool of analysis to explore the ethics of both the conversion exchange and the SSS money for convert story exchange. The moral frameworks around commodities as discussed by Sandel (1998) in *What Money Can't Buy, The Moral Limits of Markets* is useful. Sandel addresses the modern tendency to extend markets to certain life spheres that it does not fit. He uses two arguments to object to certain types of commoditizing and market-oriented thinking. First, he argues against involuntary commodification, or coercion, in which people sell out of necessity (such as parts of their bodies, etc.). These should not be up for sale. Coercion can be evaluated by testing whether life situations necessitate exchanges that would otherwise not happen. Here, the key ethical concern revolves around the voluntary nature of commodification and corresponding necessitated exchange. I argue that the promises offered to the chronically poor (security and social inclusion) represent

their two most affective aspirations given the historical structural oppressions and neo-liberal economic policies that leave them on the outside looking in at a modernizing process. If this is accurate, it is fair to conclude that conversion in certain cases represents an involuntary exchange and therefore should be considered coercion.

Missionaries and pastors would likely counter this line of analysis by arguing that political Hindus use a coercion of their own through narratives that restrict free movement away from Hinduism. Hindu teaching and practice have historically oppressed *Dalits*, restricting them from a Christianity that offers inclusion and hope. They would point out that this restriction of freedom of religious movement results in a harsh response from families and communities and causes the real damage to converts. As such, the violence that converts experience is dependent on coercive Hindu nationalism. So again, one's predilections determine ethical conclusions with respect to conversion politics.

Sandel also offers an objection to the commodification of certain things in relation to corruption. Here, he argues there is a necessary degrading effect of market evaluation that can be understood as corrupting certain types of goods. In certain cases, there is a sanctity that should not be violated by degradation of the market such as in the case of surrogate pregnancies, paid military service where the poor mostly serve, and perhaps, most obviously, prostitution that some argue degrades the moral value of human sexuality. I describe the commodification of SSS as a further example of corruption where the sanctity of a religious moral decision is used to benefit missionaries who telling these stories to induce donations and degrades the value of the act.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is structured in three sections that relate to the three exchanges that I argue

account for the expansion of the AG as a global enterprise.

Part 1: The Made Pure Embrace Exchange

I call the first exchange the 'Made Pure Embrace' (MPE). Here I argue that prospective converts willingly participate in AG churches as crypto-religious unbaptized believers in exchange for being welcomed and embraced by the middle-class social. This participation and social inclusion embrace exchange is made compelling by two primary factors: unfulfilled aspirations and localized prosperity gospel.

In Chapter Two, *Untouchable Aspirations*, I review the literature that outlines the general struggles for chronically poor, low caste, and marginalized urban Hindus. Then, I will describe the pre-conversion hardships of AG converts as relayed to me in their oral-history testimonies.

In Chapter Three, *A Localized Gospel*, I describe the content and differences in the teaching emphasis of AG India prosperity gospel to their missionary counterparts who emphasize health and wealth. I ground the discussion in the literature of homogeneity and locality, slippage, and hybridity. I argue that doctrinal paradoxes allow for a wide swath of possible meanings and analyze slippages through Homi Bhabha's mimicry and meaning that result in a glocalized version of prosperity that addresses the desires of the chronically poor.

In Chapter Four, *Made Pure Embrace Exchange*, I describe the first exchange, social inclusion for participation. Here, I describe how Hindu prospective converts are welcomed into the AG community and allowed to freely participate.

Part 2: The Safe Secure Future Exchange

The second section focuses the second exchange that I am calling the Safe Secure Future exchange where participants willingly commit to the ethical, time, and financial demands including fully renouncing Hinduism toward authentic conversion marked by the ritual of baptism in exchange for continued participation, earthly prosperity, protection, and eternal security. I argue that there are two key factors that compel converts to complete this exchange.

First in Chapter Five, *The Drama of Hope*, I look at AG rituals and theorize the Holy Spirit as compelling affect that renders AG teachings true and gives converts the confidence to embrace new knowledge regimes.

Second, Chapter Six, *AG Church and Economic Development*, explores AG churches as community development operations that offer participants a variety of practical assistance with a goal to raise the individual and collective socio-economic well-being.

Chapter Seven, *The Safe Secure Future Exchange*, describes the second conversion exchange that moves participants to full membership status. Here, Hindus who are participating in the AG are taught a version of prosperity gospel logics in which a Safe Secure Future (SSF) is only possible with a full commitment and singular Christian identity.

Part 3: Saved Soul Stories Exchange

The final section describes missionaries, their role in India, and their fundraising activities as they exchange saved soul stories (SSS) for donations and social rewards.

Chapter Eight, *Missionary Middlemen and Commoditization of the Gospel*, explains

how convert stories are commoditized by missionaries whose primary work is acting as middlemen who exchange SSS for donations from the west.

The final chapter, *Assemblies of God and the Global Trade of Saved Soul Stories*, describes the global SSS trade network through an engagement with commodity chains literature using a single missionary sermon delivered by the keynote speaker at the centennial celebration of the Assemblies of God.

This sets the scene: a former insider's telling of an aggressive and expanding Pentecostalism, its message, missionaries, and money among the pliable yet resistant North Indian Hindu milieu. I study the resulting small but growing set of Indian churches under the banner of the Assemblies of God in which the majority of converts are formerly Dalit and chronically poor.

Chapter 2

Untouchable Aspirations

'The untouchables are like lost rupees, on which dust, soil, dirt, and mire has gathered. But just as dirty and tattered rupees do not lose their actual value, similarly in the eyes of God the value of these people does not decrease. And we missionaries are here precisely to reform these dirty sinners.'[16]

Introduction

In this chapter, I attempt to establish a baseline of the pre-conversion life experiences expressed in the oral histories of the converts with whom I talked. I describe the general set of challenges linked to social and caste-based exclusion and economic hardship using ethnographic examples. I attempt to show that what converts desire prior to conversion is social inclusion and economic security. Dissatisfaction with Hinduism and the attraction to Pentecostalism can be understood in how each addresses the wider ills of urban slum realities.

Christian communities are increasingly being understood within the contexts of globalization. These changes include urbanization, privatization of public spaces, and increasingly salient class inequalities (Bielo 2011, 2013). There is a tension between anti-modern sentiments expressed by evangelicals, use of modern discourse and technology (Bialecki et al. 2008; Harding 2000), and forms of organization (Elisha 2008). A move towards urbanism has encouraged the tension between faith that simultaneously channels modernity and anti-modernity (Bialecki et al. 2008).

Urban spaces in India are flooded with global capitalism. Even those who are shut

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[16] From a missionary tract, (Jati panti ka varnan 1924: 15) as quoted in Gupta (2014: 679-680).

out from participation in consumerism by poverty none the less live within a modern global ethos. Similar to urban slums in other parts of the 'global south', slum communities in Delhi are made of crowded, narrow walkways weaving around and atop open sewers. Houses are literally crammed on top of one another and separated by thin walls, filled with children playing with makeshift toys such as tires that they roll with a stick. I sketched in my notebook after a walk through one slum, 'they have no place to go and no place to hide, surrounded on every side by a community of rivals, together striving, together hopeless.'

A slum community in Delhi situated across from an AG church (Chandran 2018)

I first met pastor Kapil and Joy, his ministry partner and wife, in 1999, not long after I moved to India and within only months of them becoming the pastors of a small church in South Delhi that gathered directly across the street from a very large slum. They lived on the third floor in a one-room flat connected to a small hall that could accommodate approximately 30 congregants sitting on the floor. I remember that just after we had tea he took me out on the veranda where we could look down over the slum that he reported at the time had a population of 100,000 people. He is a second-generation minister who had a dramatic healing in his youth that he concluded 'set him apart for ministry' and was accompanied by a passion and desire to reach unreached areas of India with the gospel.

He is well educated compared to most of his colleagues with an undergraduate degree at the well-respected Southern Asia Bible College in Bangalore, followed by a master's degree in sociology. He then went on to complete a second master's degree in theology from Westminster College at the University of Oxford.

His enthusiasm to help those facing hardship was infectious and we spent time talking about the needs and the various social programs that we could work on together (meaning he would do the work and I would provide the funds).

I would soon learn that his passion and adeptness at pastoral work was only out-matched by his energetic and charismatic wife who shared his work and continues as a co-pastor in his expanding empire. She holds a PhD in economics from a South Indian university and, to me, seemed to be the organizer of the workforce and strategic thinker of the operation. She would enter the conversation on and off as she moved in and out of the kitchen to serve us, and he often needed to ask her about details of their social programs.

As I sat in their un-air conditioned and cramped living space sipping tea, I thought of the great commitment and sacrifice they were displaying. With their credentials they could

have chosen a much more economically rewarding path. Yet, he followed a calling (in the Pentecostal sense) to North India and pursued the opportunity to occupy the small flat purchased years earlier by the Assemblies of God.

He recounted his call to the slum in a story when he was a teacher at Central Bible College before taking over the slum church. He met a mother from the slum who was crying and telling her story of hardship. Her drug-addicted husband had just sold their 12-year-old daughter to a pimp for 20,000 rupees (300 GBP). He explained that his compassion in that moment sealed his commitment to the slum dwellers of New Delhi.

I was moved to help and soon began to send funds for their education project. Over the years as a missionary, I visited often and was impressed by his program's continual expansion. They had the opportunity to purchase the adjacent flat with the help of missionaries and renovated it into a hall that could accommodate 200 congregants. They began to train junior pastors and spread to other South Delhi slum communities.

I remember one visit in particular. We stood on his veranda together, both in shock as Delhi authorities came with hundreds of police and bulldozers to knock down the small slum houses along the main road made of unreinforced bricks and sheet metal roofs. The first four or five rows of homes were encroaching onto an area where the street was going to be widened according to the city plan.

The authorities had every legal right as the community had expanded and encroached the planning space of a main transport route that was going to be widened. Kapil explained that any land ownership agreements the residents might have were quasi-legal arrangements at best and would not hold up in court, not that they would ever be challenged there. Those watching their homes being crushed by the bulldozers had only a security that was woven in threads of corruption where bribes, normally paid monthly, to

police allowed them to construct and live. On this day it was coming apart. I remember as the bulldozer moved row by row clearing a several block stretch as families waited until the very last moment, sometimes jumping out from the second level holding in their hands all that they owned. It was an emotive scene; the power of government, enforced by police in riot gear, anticipating a resistance that would never materialized. The event solidified in both of us at that time the need for a church and educational programmes they were offering.

I was now returning nearly 20 years after we first met and many years after I had left my missionary career. They continued to live in the same flat, and their children had grown up alongside their work. Kapil had built a slum school system with over 2,000 children in eight different slums. They oversaw a team of 15 junior pastors that have planted daughter churches in multiple locations in different languages (Hindi, English, Malayalam, Nepali, Bodo, and Tamil) together numbering into several hundred weekly attenders. This was a massive expansion from their humble beginnings. Early in their work they requested that I help them purchase a sound system. I thought at the time, 'do they really need a sound system for 30 people sitting in a small room?' Yet, I arranged the funds and, from a missionary investment standpoint, it appeared to have paid off. Kapil mentioned as we ate that he still used the system.

I asked Kapil about the background of his congregants. Joy answered the question, demonstrating that she continued to be engaged in the everyday slum outreach and educational programs. She said they were all migrants who clustered according to language, some from West Bengal, some from Nepal, some from Uttar Pradesh, and other parts of North India. She mentioned the intergenerational poverty experienced by migrants and that nearly all were low caste or *Dalit*. *Dalit* is the politically charged term that Christians use inclusively to those of low caste, oppressed, and chronically poor backgrounds. I took

her at her word,[17] which was consistent with what other pastors I talked to who also reported a large percentage of first generation converts from low caste backgrounds. However, my convenience sampling of oral histories where caste backgrounds were discussed resulted in only about half of respondents reporting backgrounds of traditionally excluded caste status.

Yet all of those I talked to described their pre-Christian life as full of hardship and economic insecurity. In this chapter, I attempt to marry together the categories of chronically poor and religiously/socially-excluded as generally capturing the pre-Christian realities of AG converts. My goal is to explore the neo-liberal, globalized, Hindu-nationalist cultural milieu and its impact on the marginalized. I hope to demonstrate that what unites these converts is that they aspire to greater social inclusion as well as material, spiritual, and physical security. They describe, looking back, Hindu participation as the cause or sometimes the exacerbation of their oppression story. None of them reported a sense of appreciation of their previous identity or ritual practice. Perhaps this is the result of Pentecostal efforts to demonize Hinduism. Whatever the cause, they show nothing but distain for the religion of their birth.

Social Aspirations

'Broken' is perhaps the best word to describe the way converts speak of their pre-Christian life. It is also the literal meaning of the word *Dalit*, untouchable, or outcast according to the Hindu caste system. It is perhaps difficult for most readers to fully grasp what it means to be untouchable. Indians are separated by income disparities and social relations marked by cultural, religious, and caste differences (Gupta 2005). First, there is a lack of mobility; one

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[17] I regret now not getting more detailed demographic information on the congregations of the study. And as result I do not have exact data as to the caste distribution of the converts.

who is born *Dalit* also dies *Dalit*. It is a status one inherits along with a myriad of occupations, including sweeper and toilet cleaner, seen as fitting their unclean and ritually polluted status.

Modern urban Indian society is increasingly distinguished by a clear connection among self-esteem, social inclusion, and economic participation through consumerism. Nielsen and Wilhite's analysis of the *Rise and Fall of the Peoples Car*, the TATA Nano follows Fernandes (2009) and Mazzarella (2003) by arguing that liberalization reinforces a new aspirational ethos and replaces frugality with consumption as the determinant of social status (2015: 272). Cars are perhaps the clearest sign of middle-class aspirational consumerism as symbols of status. The Nano was marketed and priced so affordably (100,000 IRS, or just over 1,000 GBP) that it was expected that thousands would turn in their two wheelers, which cost only marginally less money, avoid the rain, and drive their way into the middle class. However, the marketing campaign backfired, and, instead, the 'peoples' car was stigmatized by its own messaging. The world's cheapest car lost its social value, no longer a symbol of inclusion, and signalled instead 'an incomplete or adverse inclusion into the new Indian middle class; and "Nano rejection" conversely a rejection of the status of an "incomplete" Indian middle-class consumer subject that the car conjures up' (ibid: 382). This demonstrates that 'subtle consumption hierarchies and forms of exclusion are continuously reconstituted' (ibid: 384). The markers of consumption extend across the hierarchy, the very poor rising up by paying off a scooter.

Select City Walk Mall, New Delhi (CityWalk 2017)

For the vast majority of *Dalits* and other chronically poor, the consumerism of India's middle class is outside of their reach. They are observers of globalization seen in ever-expanding shopping malls that stand next to their slums, global car brands that zoom past their rickshaws and bicycles, and fast food chains and clothing stores whose signs brighten the streets where they sweep. They are the left-out observers who do often not benefit from GDP growth, their development and socio-economic issues are largely ignored by the proponents of neoliberalism (Siddiqui 2017: 150). Yet they also live in the ethos of consumption. The gulf is widening between what they desire and what they can afford; they live in a global economy that increasingly favours the wealthy and educated, fuelled by an ethos of social inclusion based upon consumerism with the onslaught of advertising that

leaves them glaring at the markers of their own exclusion. They are excluded not solely based upon their last name, but upon what they are unable to consume.

I had an experience in Delhi that captures this landscape of exclusion while observing one of the construction labourers who lived in a colony of other workers. These workers were constructing a world-class shopping mall in Saket, South Delhi, a massive modern mall filled with brand stores and restaurants from around the world. He made the mistake of trying to enter, perhaps thinking that since he helped build the mall, he might be allowed to take a stroll through. He was in line just in front of me, standing in a queue that proceeded through metal detectors, presumably meant to stop terrorists, yet perhaps there to prevent the poor and those without means from entering. He was turned away in a similar way to how the homeless are excluded from retail establishments in the 'developed' world. Nobody asked his name, he was excluded because of his mere appearance. Had he arrived wearing a Marks and Spencer shirt and neatly quaffed hair he would have been welcomed regardless of his caste background. Yes, he was likely a low caste immigrant, but his exclusion was very much tied up with his ability to consume in a market economy.

The policy solution for the poor has been and continues to be affirmative action quotas in public sector jobs, or 'reservations'. Interestingly, a substantial expansion of the quota regime occurred almost simultaneously with the economic reforms launched in 1991. The Mandal commission report published in 1979 recommended expanding quotas beyond discrimination based on untouchability to include other backward castes (OBCs) based upon social and educational markers. These recommendations were acted upon in the 1990's and extended further in 2006 to a total set of reservations for 52% of public positions (Jayal 2015). However, Vicziany points out that public sector and state-owned enterprises are a shrinking sector (2005: 162).

However, not all *Dalits* embrace the affirmative action policies. An emerging faction rejects the politics of quotas and a culture of hand-outs in favour of making their own path through education and entrepreneurship. As Jayal concludes, 'even if on the margins, provocative reminders that, in the neo-liberal climate, alternative ways of thinking about economic opportunity are being articulated and even competing with the older narrative of welfare for disadvantaged groups' (2015: 121). There are several reasons why some *Dalits* have forsaken the path of political liberation and chosen the economic, even a neo-liberal, route to emancipation. 'The increased opportunities for social and economic mobility made possible by policies of economic reform has made sections of *Dalit* youth eager to participate in the market economy, as a way of improving their condition of deprivation, and valuing the anonymity of the city which offers possibilities of escaping discrimination' (ibid: 121). *Dalits* are aspirational, and they embrace conservative economics, independence, individualism, English, and capitalism rather than focusing upon past injustices and historic inequalities. Jayal points to the symbolic worship of the *Angrezi Devi* (the goddess of English) 'who will encourage her worshippers to seek the empowerment of their children through learning English, the language of social mobility without which jobs in the liberalized economy will be hard to come by. The goddess and the temple dedicated to her articulate this aspiration' (2013**:** 118).

Although class and caste are not exactly correlated, since class diversity exists within a single caste and vice versa (Natrajan 2005: 229), caste descriptors remain both public and private markers that largely dictate social relations (Gupta 2005). Dumont understood caste to be the result of values that were universally held at all levels of society whereby the social whole is valued over the individual. His 'hierarchical encompassment' attempted to explain the system apart from western individualistic values that saw caste as

oppression and exploitation. He argued that if the whole is the subject versus the individual, then differentiation is part of the 'necessary order' of the system (1980: 107).

Caste is held together through principles of purity and contagion. Higher castes are considered purer, with higher rank, prestige, and power than those below. Castes are stratified at one level by the *varna*, or ranking system. In descending order, the varna categories are priests (Brahmins), lords or warriors (Kshatriyas), farmers or merchants (Vaishyas), and servants (Shudras). Within each of these larger groupings are multiple caste groupings (Jatis) that further stratify society. At the very bottom of the scale lies a fifth category, technically outside of the system, known as 'untouchables' given their 'polluting' essence. This group has come to be known as '*Dalits*' who are 'impure', resulting in their social exclusion and isolation from the rest of society. The consequence of caste is that those not twice born are polluting to higher castes and largely relegated to chronic poverty. According to the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, they 'represent a community of 170 million in India, constituting 17% of the population. One out of every six Indians is Dalit, yet due to their caste identity Dalits regularly face discrimination and violence which prevent them from enjoying the basic human rights and dignity promised to all citizens of India'.[18]

Clarenda Still argues that caste categories are no longer the basis for discrimination. Following Parry (1999, 2007) and Bayly (1999), she concludes that two groupings, clean and unclean, have remained the boundaries of discrimination. She also argues, following and referencing Béteille (1991) and Fuller (1996), that the new basis of discrimination is reservations and that caste as the basis of discrimination is no longer socially legitimate. She concludes that 'alternative terms are used to justify avoidance of *Dalits.* In everyday conversation, untouchability is rarely if ever invoked to explain *Dalit* inferiority. Rather, the upper castes articulate their superiority using a discourse about affirmative action (known as

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[18] National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights 2017.

"reservations" and referred to as such from here on), habits, morality, and cleanliness' (Still 2013: 68)*. 'Reservations' provide *Dalits* with jobs, however, do so in a way that continues the separation of *Dalit* identity from those of other castes. Reservations are the modern apparatus of implementing caste identity, and that because of this system, *Dalits* continue to be viewed as unqualified for reservation jobs, different, and incapable. She argues that *Dalits* are now stigmatized as being unhygienic, lazy, uneducated, and lacking self-control, and that the advantages of reservation policies are outweighed by the impact of upper-caste anger (2013: 76).

When converts told me their stories, it was not surprising then that they considered Hinduism to be part of their problem rather that a solution. The social exclusion of Dalits is grounded in Hinduism and later became a wider Indian phenomenon. The presumed impurity of lower castes and the idea that low caste substances cannot be co-mingled with those of high caste, a contagion that prevents social mixing, is expressed in everyday values that are grounded in religious texts*. Low caste members are considered inferior and not allowed to eat with or marry those of higher, *twice born* castes. They can experience severe sanctions if they violate these prohibitions.

Usha's story demonstrates how a combination of forces makes it difficult for the chronically poor and low caste to break into a middle-class status. Usha, 27 years old, told a story that exposes perhaps the most important aspiration of chronically poor *Dalits* to be socially embraced. Her family, a Harijan (scheduled caste) family, migrated from Madhya Pradesh and arrived in a Delhi slum, similar to the one across from Kapil's church, to find social exclusion because from neighbours who themselves strive within chronic poverty.

Usha's first years in Delhi were spent as a teenager living in a small slum community near the railway. Migrants constructed their homes in the space, 10 to 15 meters, between

the tracks and regular authorized housing. Children used the rail tracks as both their playground and their toilet. A mere 100 meters away was a private school for the upper-middle class and a bustling business district displaying the symbols of the life on the other side.

She described the challenges of her childhood as a combination of her father's alcoholism, poverty, and gender bias. She told me with a hint of pain in her face that her four sisters and two bothers lived with an abusive father who beat their mother and did not financially support the family. She was a 'disliked and not respected' girl from the slum trying to survive. She described how her mother would work, 'in many houses for food that she would bring home for the six of us'. The payment of food was often old stale leftovers. The excess of the middle class that was likely headed for the garbage bin was now more conveniently used as the currency to pay for cheap house cleaning labour.

Hardships like these led Usha and her sisters to become dancers. She emphasized that they were 'orchestra dancers', no doubt to make clear they were not part of a long history in India of dancing connected to prostitution. *Devadasis,* female servants of god, are dancers and traditionally also temple prostitutes. In modern society, Indian online porn sites continue to appropriate the dancing *devadasi* in their marketing. It is not surprising that Usha's mother refused to allow them to work as dancers because 'it was not considered a good profession'.

Yet Usha and her sisters decided to take the man's offer and began travelling and dancing, in the beginning without pay. Later, another man paid them 800-1,000 INR (eight to 10 GBP) per show each. This did not seem to me, nor would it have appeared to others in Usha's community, to be the going rate of amateur dancers. She said that her father publicly removed her mother's sari and beat her, accusing her of sending his daughters to be

prostitutes, an act that distanced himself from their work. Regardless, according to Usha, they travelled to various cities from the age of 14 to 21 and earned enough to buy a new house. They continued to experience social rejection from their poverty stricken and probably jealous neighbours regardless and perhaps because of their improved economic fortune. Upward economic mobility, either through attaining a coveted government job made possible by reservations or through taking on questionable but profitable professions such as dancing, offer only partial relief. Her decision to dance, driven by extreme poverty and love for her struggling mother, left her excluded from her slum village community who's residents themselves are excluded from the wider middle-class social that they strive to join.

Usha says that long after her dancing career ended, she continued to face 'social pressures'. Then she did the unthinkable, she married outside her caste to a Christian boy, which she said resulted in her being 'boycotted'. She was no longer 'invited for various occasions and weddings by the villagers and family members'. Her later conversion resulted in 'severe opposition from my society'. She claimed, 'I would have been paid much more to be converted'. She said that even her current employer yelled at her for leaving Hinduism. It was only by joining a new social group and embracing a new identity that Usha could free herself from the various faces caste impurity. A high paying job would be met with accusations of immorality, government affirmative action employment would be countered by claims undeserved or unmerited benefits, and marrying into a Christian family and converting would be chastised as converting for money. Moving outside the socio-cultural value system and into a parallel Christian one offered the proud personhood that Usha desired.

Her conversion and marriage eventually brought her into this middle class through the gate of an AG church. Usha understood her good fortune to be a matter of God's grace and sovereignty. Her past community still viewed Usha as cheating her

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way into the better life they all desire. Usha saw it differently with a concluding proclamation, 'I know the truth; Jesus has chosen me'.

Economic Aspirations

Neo-liberal economic reforms and the 'new economic policy' or NEP (Das 2015: 715)[19] are captured by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mantra, 'minimum government and maximum governance' (ibid 717). These reforms have been variously viewed as a poverty reduction catalyst creating employment and increasing tax income to bolster social programs (Das 2015: 716) in addition to being criticized as an expression of class power with fewer market regulations (Harvey 2005). The NEP attempts to attract foreign capital investment by making cheap resources and labour available and aims to keep India competitive in an age of wider global neo-liberalization. Brand India is experiencing a boom expecting to grow at 6.75% in FY2017-18 with rising foreign exchange reserves of 414.78 billion USD (319 billion GBP) as of January 19, 2018. Also rising are numbers related to strength in industrial production, mergers and acquisitions, private equity and venture capital, and infrastructure and declining deficit.[20] The number of people living below the poverty line of 1.46 GBP per day has trended dramatically down from 33 per cent in 2005 to only 17 per cent in 2013. Many have embraced the market as a medium for economic uplift including development agencies with micro-credit schemes, self-help ideologies, and a fetishization of capitalism.

However, most continue to question the real benefits to those at the bottom of the wealth spectrum. Although the adoption of neoliberal economic policy in 1991 has increased GDP overall, it has resulted in weak expansion in employment. India has the largest number

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[19] See also Ahluwalia 2002; Byres 1997; Sengupta 2008; Subramanian 2008.
[20] India Brand Equity Foundation 2018.

(200 million plus) in poverty and accounts for 30 per cent of the world's children in poverty.[21] India's neo-liberal agenda is thought to make the poor more susceptible to continued foreign exploitation and has 'heaped unspeakable miseries on the bottom 700–1,000 million people in India' and produced a 'massive amount of economic inequality, insecurity, and unemployment' while relaxing employee protections (Das 2015: 719). Policies have resulted in the clearing of slums and other unsanctioned communities to make space for enterprise (ibid: 720). Critics of neoliberal policies also argue that 'unregulated growth, control of society's resources by big business, the exploitation of labour, income inequality, and ecological devastation cannot be compatible with socially coordinated wealth creation, equality, solidarity, popular democracy and satisfaction of human needs' (ibid: 725). The lament among many is that it has raised the 'extreme-right to dominance into vast areas of ideology, economy and culture' (Siddiqui 2017: 143).

Das claims that the NEP is neither new nor only economic, but 'represents the demands of the capitalist class, and more specifically, the demands of hegemonic fractions of the domestic and foreign-diasporic capitalist class at a particular stage in the development of Indian and global capitalism' (2015: 717). Many conclude that Indian policies are selling out its people as cheap labour for foreign owned multinational business by deregulation and trade liberalization (Das 2015: 717). These policies signal moving on from the Nehruvian age[22] in which the state intervened to protect the masses from business, with mixed results by all accounts. This socialist leaning ideology has been replaced by 'market fetishism in all spheres of everyday life and social consciousness' (ibid: 718). Just as labour markets are pressured and employee protection and social services are relaxed, there is an increase in ethos of consumerism fuelled by the influx of foreign brands.

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[21] World Bank Group 2016.
[22] Named after the policies of Jawaharlal Nehru the first Prime minister, also referred to as Nehruvian socialism.

It is a normal part of pastoral work in India to visit congregants during the week. During my research for this project, I was invited to come along on pastoral visits. Every chance I got, I jumped in the car. With one exception, the families we visited lived in unauthorized squatter communities or in rented flats in crowded, lower income areas of Delhi. On one occasion, I was invited to dinner at a home in a south Delhi slum with pastor Kapil. The family lived in this particular area because it was Bihari speaking. They like thousands of others in this inner slum of the larger *kutchi* colony, or unauthorized community known as Sangam Vihar, had moved from their villages hoping for a better life. Many of the early settlers in the late 1970's came as construction labourers and over time would welcome family and friends to join them. The result is clusters of settlers from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Bihar.

Kapil and I travelled together in his new Toyota SUV sitting in the rear seat and talking as his driver manoeuvred the narrow and overcrowded street, one of two paved (*pucca*) roads that connect the one million (est.) Sangam Vihar residents to South Delhi to its North. The one mile trip took us over 30 minutes with frequent long delays as the vehicles in front of us would organize their way out of traffic jams caused by any vehicle stopped in the road to make a delivery which would bring the traffic on the four metre wide road that already accommodated two lanes of traffic to a halt. This was the access point to various little side streets, some paved and others dirt, and to a variety of mostly multi-storey buildings and tent communities of migrant labour and other new residents. The main roads were lined on both sides with shops that provide household goods as well as construction materials, and as such it functioned as the main shopping bazaar. There was no space for public transportation, so locals walked, used autos (motorized rickshaws), bicycles, scooters, and the occasional horse to their way to the main roads. As far as I could tell there were no green spaces, parks, and very little in the way of trees or greenery. There was also

no sewage system and judging by the smells, the septic systems were either not well contained or absent in some areas where small streams of open sewage cut through the lanes, likely headed back into the ground water supply that relies on bore wells. The public benefits generally afforded to urban spaces are not available to residents of unauthorized communities, which leaves them hostage to paying local self-appointed authorities in order to gain and maintain access to water, electricity, and waste management. Police are paid to allow shops to operate businesses without proper licences and not to report or tear down illegal construction.

I was overwhelmed with the generosity of the host, whose earthly possessions consisted of a small cook stove, a few vessels and utensils, a large thick blanket, a change of clothes, along with a bar of soap and toothbrush. The entire family was made of husband Rahul, wife Preti and their two biological children along with a nephew who shared their tent, sat with pastor Kapil and I on the floor. Together we filled their entire home leaving just enough space for Preti to prepare dinner over a small one-burner gas stove. Our conversation centred on Rahul's volunteering at the church with pastor Kapil, emphasizing the incredible sacrifice given that to get by, the entire family gathers and recycles trash. Rahul was proud, he told me about the different types of trash and how certain plastic were worth more. He spoke in a simple Hindi that I could understand, and looking at the pastor as he spoke said, 'everybody can work for God'. The pastor informed me that serving us chicken cost our host family nearly one week's salary. I thought to myself, 'perhaps the family goes without the few days after I leave?' I was unsure of how to respond other than thanking them over and over. Their large smiles displayed a genuine gratitude that I visited their home. I remember thinking of the incredible resiliency of these families on the margins. Over the years, encounters like these have formed a very positive opinion of these families, hardworking and extremely hospitable and generous.

Hinduism and Hindutva

The Modi government has implemented two changes that have significantly affected the security of *Dalits*. The first set of changes, as we have seen, consists of a move towards neo-liberalism in which 'unemployment has increased and rural real wages are falling, and material insecurities of crucial groups such as farmers and informal workers are actually increasing' (Siddiqui 2017: 149). The second set of changes is related to *Hindutva*, a more social phenomenon and a 'crude attempt to camouflage upper-caste Hindu groups, who have used religion as a tool to maintain their hegemony over the vast majority of the Indian people' (ibid: 181).

The election of a Hindu-nationalist party, ideologically aligned with a preservation and promotion of religious fundamentalism including casteism, is a sign that these values are not abating. So, any discussion of *Dalit* aspirations related to Christianity must also be viewed within the current rise of politics of the anti-minority philosophy known as *Hindutva* or Hindu-ness represented by the RSS, BJP, VHP, Bajang Dal, and Shiv Sena (Siddiqui 2017: 142). The Rashitriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), perhaps the most notorious of these groups, is a volunteer organization that provides Hindu discipline training for the purpose of 'unifying' a Hindu nation. The BJP and RSS are fully committed to the *Hindutva* ideology and the marginalization of Muslims, Christians, and other religious minorities. It is taught in their schools that Christians are unreliable foreigners (ibid: 143). This has led to the spread of pan-Indian anti-conversion meta-narratives and increased feelings of insecurity amongst religious minorities (Sen 2015). It is known for its 'saffron terror' attacks[23] on minority communities, including the highly publicized killing of missionary Graham Stains and his two

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[23] Also been accused of Malegaon blast in 2008, Samjihuuat express bombing 2007, Ajmer dargan 2007, Gujarat riots and Godhra train burning, Mecca Masjid bombing 2007.

sons who were burned to death in 1999. The political front for the RSS is the BJP which houses most of its leaders including the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, who has a history of RSS membership.

Communalism in the 'politics of the ruling class continues in an age of capitalist development' (Siddiqui 2017: 144). The result is that *Dalits* and other chronically poor groups are moving towards increased social and economic insecurity, including educational opportunities for children, health care, housing, family social responsibilities, weddings, and funerals. Given that Indian society continues to face divisions along religion, caste, and region which are exploited by identity politics that disable effective political action, keep groups divided and oppressed, and erode democratic processes of the poor, it is not surprising that converts see their culture rooted in Hinduism as responsible for their struggles.

The challenges of caste were not, however, the most prevalent elements of insecurity in the pre-conversion stories that I heard. Nearly every story included some combination of a physical ailment that required a spiritual remedy. This might be an illness, a spiritual oppression, or some combination of the two.

Pastor Vinod is most respected and loved because of his gentleness and kindness. I have known him for nearly 20 years and have rarely if ever seen him angry. This conversation was different. I had called him up to have lunch and my purpose was to talk about Pentecostalism and caste. The Christian response to the caste system in India is by no mean homogeneous, [24] although I was already aware that AG Pentecostal pastors demonize caste along with other aspects of Hinduism. However, some churches do respect

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[24] The twentieth century Portuguese Roman Catholic, Roberto de Nobili, embraced the caste hierarchy in order to convert Brahmins. See Mosse (2012) for a historical account of Roman Catholic and Pentecostal different practices with regard to caste in Tamil Nadu.

caste markers when arranging marriage and selecting leadership. So, as pastor Vinod and I sat eating very spicy South Indian food at the Tamil Nadu Bhavan, he ran his hand through his rice and dal and raised his voice; 'brother, the Caste system is of the devil. We will never respect it. It is demonic!'. I knew where he stood. He continued by explaining how everyone in his church is mixed, each viewed as an individual of equal value. He may have been stating an ideal theological position, but I doubt that this position is very different from the stance he takes when teaching and preaching. In terms of practice, there are no caste-related requirements for participation or for holding leadership positions within AG churches and most do not consider caste when arranging or sanctioning marriages. In this way, most Pentecostal churches offer a clear contrast to Hinduism for those looking to transcend their caste status. We will see later that although wealth is valued within the Pentecostal church, the poor are heartily welcomed. So, neither the social boundary markers of caste or economics exclude new attenders.

In practiced Hinduism, the needs outside of human control and remedy are often interpreted as the result of curses or the evil eye. These become sources of insecurity because when problems are remedied through ritual acts like *jadu-tona* or witchcraft (Kapferer 1983), the goal of which is to provide protection by also may be used to cause harm to another. This results in cycles of revenge and rivalries within the community mediated through sorcery that are the result of disputes within families, castes, and between castes as individuals 'compete for limited economic and political resources' (Deliege 2002: 15).

Trying out *jadu-tona* as remedies prior to conversion was commonly mentioned by respondents. In most cases, it involved hiring a *pujari* or specialist who removes a curse and attacks one's neighbours or enemies through *mantras* or spells. These same practitioners are hired to diagnose and cure illnesses or other misfortunes, including financial hardships

that a client is experiencing. First, the *pujari* checks for the nature of the witchcraft attack and prescribes a solution (normally for an extra charge). The result, as has been described to me, is a cycle of attacks between enemies whereby hardships are understood to be the result and revenge is often exacted. This is a never-ending cycle that is impossible to fully remedy resulting in the continual payment for remedies and revenge.

I met Rupa after a Sunday meeting. The pastor pointed her out as a 'prayer warrior' and so I asked her about it. She passionately explained that her younger sister was demon possessed and her family had tried 'all places' or everything including '*tantric*, *jadu-tona*, and they even went to *dargah*'.[25] These failed and 'there was no improvement in my sister's health. Her condition was deteriorating'. One of her family members attended the AG church and told her mother that the pastor's prayer would 'deliver' her daughter from the demon. So, the family brought her to the pastor who prayed and cast out the demon. Rupa reflected that this is when 'I first heard about Christ and power of prayer'.

Most converts like Rupa and her family faced more than only financial difficulties. When considering their beliefs in ghosts, demons, and other spirits who can wreak havoc on their own accord, a picture emerges of added fear and insecurities founded in cosmological understandings of the world. The fear and possession of evil spirits and/or the effects of witchcraft is often reported as an underlying source of suffering that motivates converts to 'try out' Pentecostal Christianity. In his historical study of Catholic Christians, Mosse observed an attraction to Pentecostalism because it provides a spiritual solution that counteracts evil powers rather than the mainline church approach that discounts the existence of evil spirits (2012). Indeed, for those I interviewed, part of the attraction to Pentecostal Christianity was this spiritual remedy. This is especially true when the individual

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[25] *Dargah* refers to a place of worship used by many different religious groups and has been thought to shape religious identity and facilitate healing (Bellamy 2011).

perceived a spiritual oppression, was unable to find spiritual relief from Hindu religious practitioners, and were introduced to Pentecostal remedies as an early step in their conversion process.

Rahul's life story is an example of Pentecostal spiritual remedy. The 49-year-old Hindu (*Venkatesh* caste), told me about his family's pre-conversion hardship and his wife's illness that was attributed to spiritual forces. Rahul was extremely religious. Now living in a two bedroom flat in South Extension Part 1, he recalled his life only a few years prior. He explained that he was very devout and completed all of the required post death *pujas* after his grandmother and mother expired as well as 'get up early and clean the house, go to temple and do all of the required *pujas'*. He said that gradually he viewed ritual practice as 'just formality' but continued to be faithful. His family then had what he called a 'turning point'. His wife was diagnosed with a virus that was destroying her liver. He took her to the Institute of Liver and Biliary Studies (ILBS) where they initially said she needed a transplant but also recommended an expensive vaccine that may 'stop the growth of the virus'.

In this period of worrying about his wife, as the caretaker of their two children, he had a fateful meeting with a Christian who was 'in charge of the life-saving drug' and invited the family to the AG church. Although his wife was taking the drug that was recommended, Rahul understood his wife's later recovery as a spiritual event. In his words, 'It was a miracle and it happened after my wife's baptism. Then we regularly began attending church'.

Pentecostal Hope

The chronically poor and socially excluded live in constant stress. A daily worry starts with achieving a basic caloric intake but extends into every area of life including their health,

family and community strife, and spiritual oppression. I argue perhaps the obvious; when we analyze the pre-conversion stories of first generation converts, we gain some understanding of their desires. The low caste and chronically poor that make up the majority of AG converts live in a constant state of societal fear and desire to be welcomed, respected, accepted both within their own communities and in relationship to the consumer social hierarchies of Delhi. They also desire socio-economic and spiritual security. Yet they also desire more than ending the socio-political marginalization and increasing their ability to participate in consumer driven society. They desire better education, image, position, and overall personal growth. As Gupta concluded with regard to *Dalit* women, they 'reflect aspirations for things that were relatively outside the realm of those strictly necessary for the survival of the individual or the community', things like 'desire for dignity, pleasure, and autonomy' (2014: 664).

The hardships and desires of AG converts conform to deprivation theories as real or felt pre-existing life situations that are defined by converts with terms like fear, hardship, trouble, problem, or suffering. Difficulties that were at times severe and even life threatening had not previously been resolved or remedied by Hindu religious practice or practitioners, by doctors in the case of illness or disease, nor by a result of hard work or luck. These un-remedied ailments represent a lost hope in old systems, whether physical, social, spiritual, or financial in nature. There is little doubt that converts are attracted to a Christian gospel that offers a remedy to their life difficulties. Given that the majority of converts are from low castes and lower economic status, these troubles are often chronic and passed from generation to generation. The correlation between a lack economic opportunity and social exclusion for AG converts as well as a loss of hope and trust in Hindu gods and religious practitioners is clear. Varsha's story is a good example.

I met Varsha, Usha's sister, on a Friday after the 'fasting prayer' meeting, a weekly tradition at AG churches. She came up the two flights of stairs from the church hall to Pastor Vinod's flat where I was staying. He introduced her and the three of us sat together over tea. Varsha and I sat on a comfortable leather couch and Pastor Vincent moved back and forth from his office occasionally filling in pieces of her story. Her story was given in the form of a 'testimony', a Pentecostal tradition where a congregant tells of supernatural provision or healing from the Holy Spirit. These normally take place during a meeting prior to prayer request, but also might be used in evangelism as convincing proof for prospective converts.

She started by telling me of how Jesus helped her when she had a 'severe stomach ache' during her first pregnancy and her husband was out of town. She prayed, 'Jesus please keep me alive till my husband comes back' and when her husband arrived, she was unconscious but alive. He 'rushed' her to the hospital where the doctors placed her on bed rest until the birth of their son.

The next part of her testimony consisted of an episode where her son was ill and how her former religious practice was not a solution and likely the cause of his problem. She took her son to meet her Hindu family at six months of age. She said her parents planned a 'grand function' but that only a few people showed up because they rejected her marriage outside of her caste to a Christian. After the function, he 'became very sick', 'had very high temperature, and loose motions and vomiting'. Her mother attributed the illness to the 'evil eyes' of some of the guests at the function. Then, her mother performed 'some *jadu-tona*'[26] and rather than curing him, he 'became worse'. Her Christian husband was angry and said she had committed a sin by allowing her mother to perform the rituals to remove the evil eye. He told her she needed to ask God for forgiveness.

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[26] Black magic defence of the evil eye.

Varsha said, that for the first time she 'knelt and prayed'. Her bodily act of kneeling or bowing, symbolic of submission, for her represented an important step towards faith. Again, the results were not immediate and they took the boy to the doctors who 'could not guarantee his life'. Neither her mother's religion nor medical science could provide the hope she desired. But as she put it, 'God did not leave us, he heard our prayers and healed my son'. She made two points further about the miracle. First, 'it was a great miracle even in the sight of doctors'. Second, it solidified her faith in Jesus that 'got very strong'.

She had one more element of the testimony, a financial miracle. Her husband had migrated to Delhi looking for work and had left her with his family. She felt judged because she, like her sister Usha, had a history of dancing. She said this was because they 'were not born in a Christian family', an example of how Hindus are seen as immoral by Christians. She was 'frustrated' and 'missing her husband', but unable to join him because of financial struggles. She said she would 'cry and pray' that her husband would 'get a good job'. She explained that he was attending Vinod's church and the pastor instructed them to pray on two fronts, for her husband's employment and admission for their son at a good school. These two prayers represent core desires and challenges for the marginalized. Gaining admission and being able to afford a respected English medium school are indicators of achieving middle class aspirations. With the help of the pastor and through the power of prayer, her goals were achieved. Her testimony concluded, 'I and my husband fasted and prayed, our son got admission in Mount Carmel School, my husband got a reasonable income, I shifted to Delhi three years back' and 'we are very happy now'. It was not until a year after these final miracles that Varsha 'took baptism' and now 'regularly prays'. She added a final sentence showing that her story of financial, social, physical, and spiritual well-being continues by saying, 'recently, before three months back, I even got a job with a very convenient timing. I am also able to spend time with my family.'

Concluding from Varsha's testimony that conversion is only a matter of pragmatically finding solutions desires creates a distorted picture, however. As I argue, the pre-conversion difficulties and the failure of Hinduism to address these are only the beginning of multiple factors that come together in most conversion stories. Just as converts interpret their social, mental, physical, and economic struggles connected to spiritual forces, a sort of holistic oppression, they search for remedies that address core spiritual problems. They are looking for holistic relief. The road they travel may be characterized by relational-social inclusion, physical healing, and economic security, but the destination is holistic; an inclusion and security that is grounded in sincere faith and offers spiritual hope for this life as well as after death.

It is helpful to unpack the ideas of desires, aspirations, and hope. Pre-conversion aspirations are desires that are yet to be realized and which a seeker actively pursues. Desire is effective and may be contrasted with hope which is passive or dependent upon some other agency such as the intervention of God or the Holy Spirit. Similar to the evangelicals of Crapanzano's research, for Indian Christians, 'time is split between the immediate this-worldly and the distant though always imminent apocalypse' hope (2003: 6). In addition, I argue, along with deprivation and disorganization theories, that in the case of the chronically poor and socially excluded, this-worldly desires are not pacified by eschatological expectation but are prominent and constitutive of shaping Pentecostalism in India. Minkowski understood the difference between the active and passive along a temporal scope. The immediate future characterized by action, the remote future characterised by prayer and ethical action, and the hope of what he calls 'mediate future' a combination of the active and passive (1970: 100).

I argue that the lives of AG converts are marked by active desire and passive hope at the same time. What I call aspirational self-alterity, the imagined future version of oneself,

is something very close to how Minkowski defines 'intimation' in that it combines effective active desire (aspiration), a loose set of defined goals, with a dependent hope (self-alterity) that is more a passive spiritual pursuit where future possibilities are achieved through the grace of God (1970: 100). Their effective desires in the present (security – inclusion) are grounded in the promises of what God will do in the future. The alternative vision of one's future condition, both in the transient perishable mediate future as well as the eternal are also both an active pursuit (socio-economic uplift, the ethical and ritual requirements of AG Pentecostalism) and passive dependence on the Holy Spirit's power and God's grace. When markers are past or goals achieved it is God who is credited. Aspirations are then always both dependent on the grace of God and interpreted as God's work, yet also a matter of active seeking out solutions.

AG pastors and lay workers offer potential converts hope for a future that must be pursued on the one hand and will be provided by God on the other. Converts pursue jobs, school admission, and medical attention as part of a desired future of well-being, but they also see this as wrapped in the goodness of God. As 'hope shares the same direction as expectation, toward the future present, and penetrates further into the future than expectation. It is more ample, more full of promise' (Crapanzano 2003: 9). The life histories of converts do not represent a purely pragmatic socio-economic pursuit, but also a spiritual or religious one. They genuinely seek a better life and a relationship with God at the same time and understand them leading to the same aspirational self-alterity destination.

Conclusion

The India in which this study takes place is a 'new India' where liberalization and globalization have raised expectations of success but also continue to relegate wide swaths

of the population outside of its reach. Neither the economic policies of the Congress Party from the 50's to the 90's nor the neo-liberalism of the BJP right have significantly benefited *Dalits*. Marginal benefits spurred in party by liberal economic policies, increased affirmative action programmes, and new *Dalit* entrepreneurship have failed to significantly benefit those who are stuck in chronic poverty and casteism and who experience declining job markets, employee protections, and steep inflation. The discriminations that plague them are too deep for political appeasement or global capitalism.

The aspirations of the chronically poor are multiple but can be summarized into two categories: social inclusion and security. Social inclusion refers to breaking from the violence of identity towards a middle-class inclusion, and security refers to realizing economic benefits and a social, spiritual, and cosmological confidence. AG converts in Delhi describe their past Hinduism as part of the oppression or barrier to achieving their goals rather than a solution or help. AG Pentecostalism offers hope that is a path of active pursuit and passive dependence on God. Imagining a better future, desiring change, and participating in the pursuit of their aspirational self-alterity are the starting lines to a conversion marathon.

Second, converts are offered security in exchange for authentic conversion which is marked by leaving Hinduism, while a wider 'new India' says to aspiring Indians, 'buy a car (the right car) and you will rise in social status', and, 'perhaps with a name change, you will be socially validated'. Indian Pentecostals say, 'you're welcome to join, then after becoming a part of the group socially, you will be transformed spiritually and eventually receive economic benefits followed by symbolic consumption that marks middle-class status'. As such, Pentecostalism offers social inclusion straight away and a short cut to social status, leading to security over time. The church offers hope in reverse, a change of identity and value system that allows individual *Dalits* to escape poverty and offers hope to those who do

not benefit from political remedies.

Chapter 3

A Localized Gospel

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I analyzed the pre-conversion stories of AG members in Delhi and argued that they aspire toward social inclusion and security. In this chapter, I will explore how the aspirations of converts correlate to the meanings, cultural logics and distinct value hierarchies that are appropriated from AG doctrine. I will briefly situate AG doctrine within the Christian knowledge tradition and discuss the missionary strategy of contextualizing and allowing for localizing the AG gospel. I will follow knowledge dissemination from the bible college to the pulpit and outline the key emphasis of Indian clergy and how these differ from American emphasis. Finally, I will argue that a series of doctrinal paradoxes provide flexibility for Indian clergy and laity to fully adopt the AG doctrinal cannon of their missionary counterparts, therefore preserving homogeneity, while at the same time emphasizing the aspects that relate to their predispositions based upon their life realities of social exclusion and insecurity. These differences or slippages represent a subtle form of contestation that uses the missionary's text and preserves doctrinal categories and language, but re-orders truths into a distinct value hierarchy. This also may account, at least in part, for how the AG has been described in various contexts as both conservative and liberal, empowering to women and patriarchal, and at times challenging to power structures and at others apolitical. In short, AG and other forms of Pentecostalism appear to be both profoundly homogenizing and localizing at the same time. I hope to take up Droogers' (2001) call for anthropologists to look at the specific characteristics that result in these paradoxical directions.

Prosperity Gospel

Engelke and Tomlinson pose 'whether it is possible to say what the properties and dynamics of Christian thought might be,' 'whether or not Christianity has a cultural logic,' and the 'extent to which people live their lives according to such a logic' (2006: 23). There have been various anthropological interpretations of the rise of prosperity gospel logics in Pentecostal Christianity. In his study of Pentecostals in Sweden, Coleman (2007) argues that broad acceptance of the prosperity gospel within Pentecostal circles is supported by the synonymous framing of wealth with spiritual gifts, such as healing. Other descriptions of the prosperity gospel include related economic logics of 'stewardship' and 'sacrifice' observed by Bialecki (2008) as forms of exchange amongst participants in the Vineyard Fellowship movement in the United States. Other anthropological understandings focus on the theological foundations of Pentecostalism which support individual financial sacrifice (Harding 2000; Hudnut-Beumler 2007; Bielo 2013).

Bielo attributes the rise and popularity of the 'prosperity gospel' to the value that Pentecostals place on one's own financial success which is or can be achieved after the 'born again' process (2007). The rise of the prosperity gospel is, in this interpretation, largely a result of Pentecostals' focus on the self and the intertwining between self, religion, and economics. In this sense, financial success is largely a factor of the new personhood that results from being 'born again' (Bielo 2007).

Haynes demonstrates how Pentecostals use prosperity gospel logics to incorporate both individual wealth and other forms of achievement through relationships (2012). Through her research in the Copperbelt region of Zambia, Haynes argues that social relationships within and extending beyond religion are characterized by practices of materialism and consumption. Specifically, Haynes argues that Pentecostals consider

materialism in ways that are relationally meaningful and that they pursue consumption in a way that is religiously motivated (2012).

Haynes also describes how exchange relationships are created when participants are organized in hierarchies of wealth and resulting relationships. Materialistic exchange therefore facilitates the integration of participants into larger networks (2012). She argues that prosperity gospel logics are utilized by Pentecostals to 'fix' tensions created by economic concerns and relationships within Pentecostal communities (Haynes 2013).

Historical Precedents of AG Doctrine

To start, it is helpful to historicize this knowledge of the Assemblies of God. The AG is characterized as fundamentalist, evangelical, conservative, and Pentecostal. Missionary knowledge is grounded in the AG doctrinal cannon, known by AG proponents as the 'full gospel', that ultimately stresses the idea that Jesus offers salvation and healing, baptism of the Holy Spirit, a millennial eschatological centring on Jesus' return, and the rapture of the church (Dayton 1987). Their doctrinal tree (see Figure 1) is traced from the early church prior to the great schism, Roman Catholicism up to the time of reformation, English/Anglican Protestantism to Methodism, and, finally, the Holiness tradition that emerged in the USA.

Each of these traditions shares the basic story of Jesus, his personhood, life, death, resurrection, and promise to return. AG doctrine acknowledges faith (*sola fida*) as a means for salvation out of the Protestant reformation in which individualism and scriptural authority challenged Roman Catholic liturgical works and church authority. AG propensity for identification with the poor and working classes expressed in 'low church' and conducting simple worship practices mixed with strict ethical prohibition are remnants of Methodism.

From the Holiness[27] movement, AG holds onto a doctrine of 'sanctification', a second grace of ethical perfection, the transition from sin to a life of holiness sometimes believed to happen instantaneously and completely or perfectly. Its distinct creedal point of departure, its own doctrinal innovation, is the post-conversion baptism of the Holy Spirit evidenced by speaking in tongues (glossolalia).

AG doctrine can be further distinguished from other Christian traditions in that it sides with Arianism and favours free will over predestination. It also promotes a strong, fundamentalist view of the inerrancy of scripture and an evangelical view of the mission of the church while standing against both liberation theologies and the ecumenical movement.

Family Tree of Denominations

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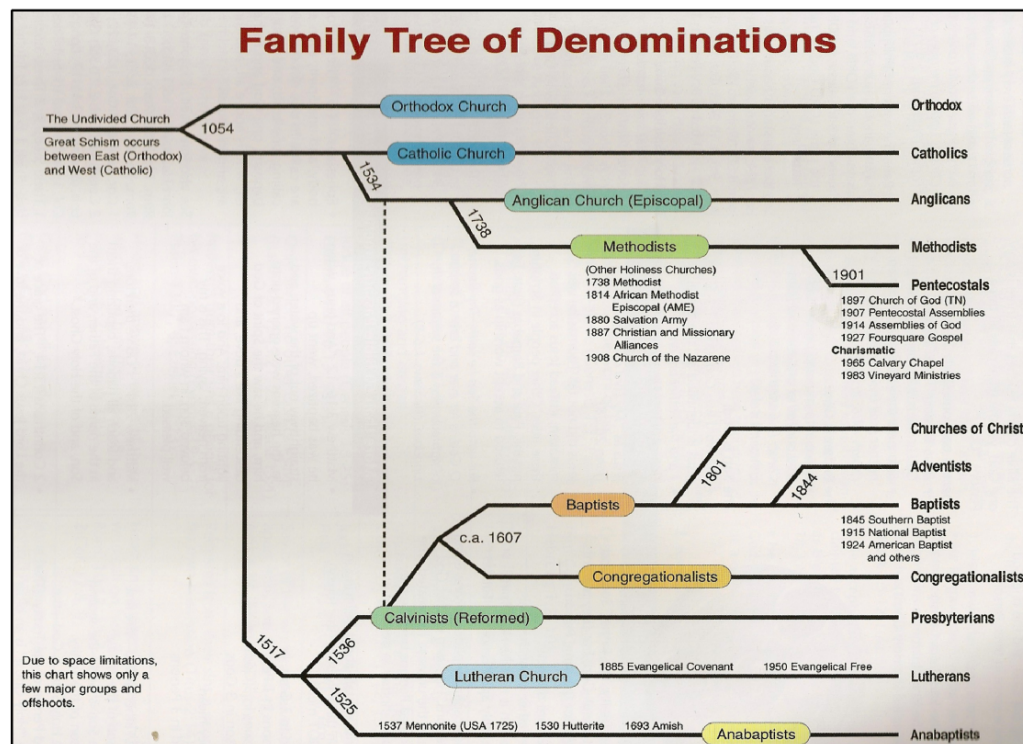
[27] The Holiness movement refers to Christian practices and beliefs that came out of 19th-century Methodism and emphasized moral perfection made possible by a secondary work of grace after salvation.

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Figure 1: Family Tree of Christian Denominations (Rose Book of Bible Maps, Charts and Time Lines 2015).

Missionary Knowledge Dissemination Strategies

Missionaries and Indian clergy consider 'preaching', or disseminating authoritative knowledge, as their central job. Bielo comments that usage of the bible comes with 'translation difficulties, language change, manuscript transmission, literacy acquisition, and the sociohistorical dissonance between biblical writers and contemporary interlocutors' (2009: 1). Bielo argues that the meaning that Christians garner from reading the Bible is tied to their own surrounding culture and circumstances (2009). The AG Indian clergy and missionaries with whom I talked are either not aware of or are not threatened by deconstructionists and other sceptics who challenge the idea that pure truth can be extracted hermeneutically from an ancient text or translated and disseminated discreetly. Rather, they hold a firm confidence that AG knowledge is an accurate reflection of the original meanings of the New Testament, pure truth, which is authoritative for all contexts and ready for widespread dissemination.

AG Indian clergy and missionaries also mostly accept modern Hindi biblical translations to be generally accurate. Although Hindi and multiple other Indian language bible translations[28] as well as AG doctrines and other denominational texts are readily available, translation of other materials, including song lyrics, is on-going. Also, for Pentecostals, the word of God continually manifests through spiritual gifts, including words of knowledge, prophecy, tongues and interpretation, and the general anointing that is

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[28] According to the Bible Society of India, 'the first Bible translation into Hindi was that of the four Gospels, made by Henry Thomas Colebrooke in 1806. Serampore missionaries' version of the New Testament was published in 1811, much of the Old Testament coming out in parts during the following years… The complete Bible in one volume was issued for the first time in 1892.' (The Bible Society of India 2015).

thought to reside with those ordained for ministry. This includes missionary teachers and preachers who have their sermons and other training materials translated by bilingual Indians.[29]

Contextualizing or localizing theological and ritual content is considered, by every missionary I talked to, to be an important and necessary third step of transmission. Although not self-conscious of the fact that their theology is culturally conditioned, they simply assume that it is 'supracultural and universally valid' (Bosch 1991) but understand contextualization as important in expediting the conversion process by making the Christian gospel more locally understandable. Protestants have termed this process 'indigenization', a process of determining the cultural and separating it from what is meaningfully idolatry or Hindu. The goal is to preserve the missionary's meanings of doctrinal knowledge, born in western theology, while allowing for stylistic Indian accommodations that include changes to the music and liturgy[30] and nuanced theologies on the periphery of what is considered essential truth.

I visited Barry, the local missionary leader, to talk about his team's strategy. His condo was in Gurgaon, which is south west of Delhi about an hour and a half from Pastor Vinod's flat where I was staying. It was a small metropolis in its own right filled with modern high-rise office complexes and condo buildings that were not far from large malls with American restaurant chains and movie theatres. It was known as a technological and financial hub, a town developed over the last 20 years to accommodate a global marketplace. Most office buildings were lit at night and filled with workers in call centres and other services whose head offices were in the west. The dust from construction projects of

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[29] It is rare for a missionary to have the sufficient skills to write, preach or teach in Hindi.
[30] These stylistic accommodations include sitting on the floor, using Indian instruments such as the *harmonium* and *tabla*, and the incorporation of Indian tunes in worship are largely not part of the large AG churches in Delhi, but do happen in home worship and new church plants.

the city's continued development mixed with smog. As I got out of my taxi and convinced the guard at the gate to let me in, I felt the polluted air of progress in my lungs.

Barry welcomed me to his flat, and as I walked in the door, I noticed the sharp contrast to the pastors' homes that I had visited. The white marble floors, modern kitchen, and furnishings including the large screen television were material symbols of a successful capitalist. I had a very log chat with Barry, and he was somewhat hesitant, perhaps unsure of my motives. I wanted to understand what was for him the heart of the matter, why he chose the life path of a proselytizing missionary. I asked him, 'what is this all about?' He understood my meaning and opened with the gospel, 'the central message is that Jesus loves all mankind and promises eternal life,' a theological frame that undergirds and gives him meaning. He then quickly moved to the challenge, I felt that he was perhaps a bit defensive as he said, 'when I talk to Hindus, I am cautious not to judge their religion, I emphasize cultural redemption and do whatever needs to be done in order to get them to be a follower of Jesus. If they just call out to God, say the sinner's prayer or read scripture, they can start the process, but I do not force a strict break from religion and understand that it is a journey'. By cultural redemption, he points to allowing Hindus to continue practicing parts of their culture that can be endued with new meaning. His summation of his work was that 'it is messy', acknowledging that the way a missionary textbook might describe 'winning souls' is not likely to happen in Indian contexts. He acknowledged the challenge of communicating the gospel when basic cosmological understandings, views of concepts like salvation, sin, and worship vary, and said, 'we need to do more than just translate the text of scripture into Hindi, we need to bring into symbols that locals can understand'. He was in favour of incorporating breaking coconuts[31] as a substitute for water baptism. Yet, he was firm that the

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[31] Coconuts have significant symbolic meaning in Hinduism connected to the three eyes of Lord Shiva. Breaking coconuts is a sign of commitment or the breaking of the egos and thus coming together with the universe.

core gospel truths are 'for the whole world' and missionaries 'must not compromise on the core' but acknowledge that 'a patient approach embraces as much Hinduism as possible' is necessary. Interestingly, the Indian clergy do not ultimately agree with the missionaries on this point. Rather, they continue to demand a strict break and have demonized all aspects of Hinduism, especially sorcery and caste.

I also visited Barry's superior in Springfield Missouri. My goal was to talk about the core of the gospel among other things. His office is in the high rise known as the 'blue building' and office complex for the various departments of the Assemblies of God, USA. The missions department was proudly the nicest and most updated of the various wings of the complex. His secretary called me back to his office after following the normal corporate protocol of first introducing myself to the receptionist who in tern called his secretary who, after about 15 minutes, retrieved me from the reception area. Omar,[32] one of five regional leaders of the world missions department, was pleasant. I was somewhat concerned given that the last time we had met many years prior, we were in the cafeteria of the same building in a heated discussion that followed with my resignation a few months later. He told me his story, but more importantly his strategy. The strategy was relational and, surprisingly to me, relaxed dogmatically speaking. He said, 'all we are looking for is that Jesus is their saviour and Lord'. He then made a point of the great lengths that he was willing to allow missionaries to go in contextualizing the gospel. So, the first part of the story of Indian localized gospel is the openness, other than the very core doctrinal standpoints, for Indians to self-theologize. However, Indian AG Pentecostals are not simply handed a bible by missionaries and told to go figure it out. The AG has a systematic way to exert worldwide organisational power toward preserving doctrinal homogeneity, the bible college.

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[32] I am using his real name as he is a public figure.

AG missionary strategy allows for indigenous or localized control and local theologizing. This includes some leeway in the meaning making process, especially if the outcome is reasonably faithful to missionary understandings of the doctrinal cannon. There is no missionary or global organizational mechanism that officially polices localized expression. The AG in India has long been trusted with this task, and it is the Indian clergy who take on the role of contextualizing or 'Indianizing' the AG gospel and policing truth boundaries.

Yet, AG missionary strategy globally is to prepare pastors in bible colleges, such as Central Bible College that I described in Chapter 1. If missionary power (Asad 1993), or the 'colonization of consciousness' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991) occurs it would be through the systematic replication of church doctrine in bible colleges. AG doctrines that serve as the fraternal glue of the global movement are transmitted institutionally to young men in residential bible colleges. These institutions represent a nexus where both missionaries and Indians in North India train and transmit doctrine and practice to clergy in training. In India, three years of bible college are required for a candidate to be considered for ordination.

The students I interviewed stated that during their youth they were drawn or called to ministry. Their spiritual experience can be described as both as hearing God's voice, although not necessarily audible but rather a sort of internal conviction. The convert called to ministry is expected to obey this alternate vision of her/his future. This future is modelled or embodied by the convert's senior pastor. Beyond being called, students also reported being active in their church's youth ministry or children's ministry. Other common experiences, somewhat predictable given that nearly all converts in North India are low-income or *Dalit* background, include 'family difficulties' and 'financial struggles'. Also, as few of the students reported having other opportunities that were abandoned in favour of going to bible college

and as AG residential schools in India offer either free or significantly subsidized education (made possible through donations from the USA) that include room and board and typically, upon graduation, placement as associate pastors with small salaries, it is not unreasonable to expect that some pastors recommend young men to bible college in order to relieve practical difficulties.

However, a pastor or young person being motivated to attend bible college as a form of social and financial relief is not an acceptable narrative for church leaders. Indian pastors condemn using financial inducement of the poor to achieve religious aims. So expectedly, no one self-reported sending or going to bible college because of the inducement of a free education and employment as a pastor upon graduation. This conjecture does not rise to the level of empirical evidence of what Hindu nationalists charge as the inducement of the poor or coercion whereby material gain in the system is expected. However circumstantial, it must be included in any description of the becoming pastor process as a pastoral trajectory offers converts, especially young men, both economic and social advantage over their likely trajectory of low level manual labour jobs in slums and other depressed communities. There is no doubt that attending bible college is a pragmatic help to young men from depressed communities. It is also perhaps an example of financial inequity where American donations become an expression of power as the primary mode of expanding AG churches and shared knowledge globally.

Localizing the Gospel

Anthropologists commonly view Pentecostal charismatic movements as a 'part-culture', or a set of values and concepts that can be understood within other cultures but which cannot replace previous norms and institutions (Coleman 2006: 2010). Christianity is subject to

change, mobility, and syncretism, leading to a global culture that is diverse but which also attempts to include central tensions of Christian faith, for example, body and spirit, materiality and immateriality, and institution and charisma (Kirsch 2008). The cultural mixing process has been theorized under the terms creolization, hybridity, 'identity as pragmatic construction' (Bhabha 1994), and syncretism, a 'negotiation of identities and hegemonies' (Stewart and Shaw 1994).

Many studies find a homogenized Pentecostalism that reproduces western structures, rituals, and doctrines wherever introduced (Lehmann 2001: 121),[33] whereas others report finding local forms of adaptation or 'indigenous appropriation and differentiation' (Robbins 2004b: 118). In relation to debates on cultural globalization, Pentecostalism 'appears to weigh in both for theories that stress processes of Western cultural domination and homogenization and those that emphasize the transformative power of indigenous appropriation and differentiation' (ibid: 118).

Unpacking Marshal Sahlins, Robbins forwards a framework of three separate culture change models defined by their outcomes. The first is 'assimilation', a process in which people arrange new circumstances into old but expanded categories and, secondly, 'transformation or transformative reproduction', defined as a change of relationship between traditional categories. The third is 'adoption' or 'replacement', or what Sahlins calls 'modernization', when people take on a new culture without any 'conscious effort to work its elements into the categories of their traditional understandings' (Robbins 2004a: 10).

Both Mosse (2012) and Joshi (2012) take up Robbins' model in their recent ethnographies of Indian Christianity, but neither accepts Robbins' typology as neatly fitting their cases. Joshi concludes that rupture can be used to describe some Naga conversion

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[33] See also Lehmann 2003; Berger 1990; Coleman 2000; D'Epinay 1969; Meyer 1999; Smilde 1997.

because religious ideas are accommodated, others 'discarded', and not in any clear 'linear sequence but through forward and backward loops and at different times from each other' (2012: 9). So, the rupture lens, especially when defined as radical discontinuity with the past, is not helpful to understand historical processes whereby affiliation and religious practice undergo inconsistent transformation.

Mosse finds the Catholic South Indian conversion experience 'strikingly different' from Robbins' typology. He says that, over time, conversion leads to 'moral outrage among discriminated and humiliated *Dalit* Christians', however, he shows that two moralities co-existed for centuries through separate 'technologies of self': one in the public sphere of transaction and relation and the other in a private realm of 'prayer, confession, and the Eucharist' (Mosse 2012: 280). Caste ranking and extreme subordination was not taught as sinful; rather, it was incorporated into Catholic ritual. This produced a dual moral system that, until recently, allowed Catholics to comfortably hold two ethics, one related to 'secular caste social realities', and the other related to personal worship and devotion that, for 200 years, kept the religious and ethical ideals of Christianity separate from the practices and obligations of caste (Mosse 2012: 281).

The economic conversion as exchange approach of this thesis lends itself to analyzing Christian meaning as negotiation especially when it travels. Elisha describes American Pentecostal volunteerism in Knoxville, Tennessee in which followers negotiate between their religion and the neoliberal economic environment (2011). One of the major contributions of Elisha's work is to highlight the missional imperatives to reach the lost versus the poor, and how they interact. Bialecki observes that this study marks a shift in the Anthropology of Christianity that identifies differences within Christianity itself, rather than differences between Christianity and others (2012).

Chatterjee suggests that part of the postcolonial subaltern discourse should include analysis of religious beliefs and practice within the history of struggle (2000: 16). Bhabha specifically points to the subversion of 'evangelical colonialism' (1994: 49). In his article 'Signs Taken as Wonders' he focuses on the failure of colonial missionaries in their attempts to convert Indians by subjecting them to Christian knowledge.

I take up Homi Bhabha not as a further contribution to the already vast postcolonial literature but to employ his concepts of 'mimicry' as a form of contestation of western 'truth'. Mimicry is the process of a recipient copying a person in power. In this process, the recipient suppresses their own cultural identity in order to access power. Bhabha argues that mimicry is also subconsciously or unintentionally subversive. The performance of copying the symbolic expressions of the colonizer makes space for a sort of reduction of power, an ambivalence produced by actors rearticulating the same texts on different stages or scenes. Mimicry results in resistance and appropriation at the same time, as sort of 'mask' and 'mockery' turning authority around, recapturing power through the expression of the hybrid (Bhabha 1994: 162). Local truth emerges as a negotiation rather than a negation. When Indian pastors teach the repetition of missionary truth, it is necessarily subverted, not directly but as part of the performance itself. The signifiers of the missionary are delivered on an Indian stage and through an Indian perspective so that reserving purity of values and meaning is untenable.

Homi Bhabha uses the example of British missionaries distributing the bible in rural India during colonial rule in *Signs Taken for Wonders* (2012) where he extends the discussion using the term hybridity. His discussion of cultural mixing narrows to a focus on religious hybridity and by extension conversion whereby again a suppression of an Indian's culture was necessary to adopt the manners and values of Christianity.

The bibles were distributed free of charge or for one INR (one pence) and were gladly accepted as either a household deity or novelty. Yet they were received on a stage where only caste Hindus would normally possess scripture. Indians are happy to accept the bible as the authoritative book of the missionary, yet in the process, necessarily pollute this authority with an interpretation from their own cultural lens. Bhabha argues, 'The displacement from symbol to sign creates a crisis for any concept of authority based on a system of recognition' (2012: 156).

However, envisioning hybridity or syncretism as blending cultural elements to create a third culture as if 'culture' exists in discrete bounded categories is problematic. Pure religion does not exist, either Hindu or Christian, given that all cultural expression is fluid in time and space and continually changing. Pentecostalism 'localizes not by fitting into indigenous cultures via some sort of syncretic melding prepared by its "primal" qualities, but by accepting as real local spirit worlds and the problems they represent' (Robbins 2004: 129, Casanova 2001). In other words, converts 'addressing local issues in locally comprehensible terms' (ibid). Pentecostals' embrace of spiritual realities might in some cases be Africanization, Latinization, and Indianization of colonial Christianity.

The performance by converts and Indian pastors who copy missionary doctrine both preserves the authenticity of conversion and provides a space where converts in new cultural contexts may assert their own agency over text. Haynes calls the shared cultural and epistemological underpinnings from which potential disagreement or agreement can occur, affordances. Missionary and Indian clergy share a common space and understanding that serves as the basis of contestation (2014).

I argue that Pentecostal doctrine offers a plentiful field of potential meanings because it takes up paradoxical positions on central truth propositions. The cleavages

produced in these paradoxes allow for the hearer and teacher to extract meaning according to their needs and agendas. In the performance of mimicry, misapprehension is avoided because the required logic is paradoxically available but power is contested and new local meanings are achieved.

Indian Christians fully adopt AG doctrinal canon without modification, but they value different elements differently. In selling, they mimic the words of the missionary and produce subtle new arrangements of the values and categories according to the needs of the consumer or 'transformative reproduction' (Robbins 2004). By arguing that Indians consume the same gospel differently I agree with Bhabha that the efforts of missionaries to impart pure knowledge to Indians through translation and enculturation are not contested by Indians through direct challenges to their authority or content, but only that the same symbols are, in the very act of transmission, necessarily variously appreciated.

Yet, homogeneity is preserved. On another conceptual plane there is third space of difference and localization that results from a new time and space engagement. A performance of transmission writes anew and creates new meaning and identities. Power is subverted through the subject position of the communicator. Positions of power are undermined, but affordances (Haynes 2014) allow Indian AG pastors to avoid overt counter hegemony as they negotiate meaning from a shared underlying epistemological framework. These result when an audience with varied predilections from the missionary participate with the missionary in the production of meaning and create something subtly different.

Indian AG Gospel

I will now turn to explore how the teaching and logics emphasized by the Indian clergy differs from those expressed by missionaries. I argue that whereas Indians emphasize elements that relate to earthly struggles, their American counterparts focus on eternal hope.

Robert's ethnographic research in a south Indian slum concludes that Christian conversion in India involves both a change in identity and a change in truth (2016). He argues the active engagement of Indian Christians searching for truth is a process of inquiry. Conversion then is a transformation of one's categories and values, or what Christians might call the renewing of the mind. It is a movement not just from one set of doctrines to anther, or ritual practice, but a negotiation of knowledge appropriation. It appears to me that the Indian AG truth that is appropriated into local theological expressions reflects the aspired security that consumers (marginalized Hindus) are seeking.

He concludes that the Christian truth is a process of 'perpetual interpretation, exploration and ongoing revelation, as fundamental ideas ('sin', 'salvation', 'grace', and so on) and the rich textual resources of scripture are worked through and applied to new contexts' (2016: 284). This process of re-making AG meaning happens within a 'complex discursive framework' and 'includes the elaborate and improvisational oral text of Sunday services, prayer groups, and Bible study meetings throughout the week that provide an evolving conceptual apparatus for both the daily and extraordinary disciplines believers undertake, as well as an interpretive framework through which to understand events in their lives and across the world' (Roberts 2016: 16). It is not just a matter of developing and memorising doctrine, but the pragmatic interplay and struggle between what the Indian convert community needs and what the text offers.

In his study of conversion stories in Nepal, Ian Gibson concludes that insecurity is a central problem that former Hindus attempt to remedy. He says that although conversion career stories normally include a need for 'healing', 'healing' itself should be understood more broadly and that although 'the physical effects of illness could still be seen on some converts reporting healing – healing meant more to them than just a physical change'. He also reports that 'the period before healing was typically described in terms suggestive of conflict (emphasizing anxiety, the danger of witchcraft, tension with family, community, healers, and deities), while the period after healing was described in terms suggesting peacefulness (highlighting mental tranquillity, security from demonic attack, harmonious relationships with other Christians, and the Christian God)' (Gibson 2017: 766).

This expanded understanding of healing in all areas of the convert's life is clearly the focus of AG teaching in Delhi. Listening and recording the elements of sermons preached and discussing these themes with the pastors, I developed a working list of AG cultural logics appropriated from AG doctrinal texts. I was fortunate to be asked to teach a class in a third-year theology course which provided me the opportunity to gather student understandings of the core conversion knowledge of salvation by assigning them to write a short paper titled, 'What does it mean to be saved?' In addition, I asked the bible college students to make modifications and/or additions to the list of logics I had developed. Throughout this process, I received remarkably unified responses about AG logics that are consistently preached.

The theological and doctrinal truths weaved throughout the sections below represent the received gospel as reported by AG believers in Delhi, the interpretation of which is related to the social, economic, and physical insecurity that Dalit and low caste converts face. This is indeed a process of negotiation not just between Indian clergy as they self-theologize but also in the active interplay of the preaching drama.

It is rare, I suspect, for a participant observer of Christianity to be given the opportunity to preach. I was afforded the chance on a Sunday morning in South Delhi. The crowd in a Pentecostal church, as I have discovered, is very instrumental in shaping the sermon. Most Pentecostal preachers do not read a prewritten sermon but prepare a set of ideas, a scripture and some illustrations, and then follow an outline. This allows for much to be said that one did not plan to say, and for a lot of flexibility. It is a common understanding that the Holy Spirit may at any time intervene and provide special revelation. It is a fluid, charismatic process. My sermon content, somewhat purposively, included both the logic that because Jesus loves us, we can expect that he will supply our needs and also, paradoxically, that because Jesus loves us, we should be willing to sacrifice in devotion to him. Those gathered, seated on the floor, had just passed through the typical emotion-filled time of singing, prayer, and other activities that is described in detail later. I was introduced with exceptional kindness and deference, no doubt in part of my being a foreign guest, perhaps also hinting at the hegemony both of the position I held as the speaker, standing and elevated on a stage, as well as that of being western.

Every person I saw had a bible and waited eagerly for me to announce the scriptural passage whereby they would hurriedly turn their pages, searching almost in competition with their neighbour to find the place, an apparent source of pride both in being able to read and negotiate chapter and verse and being able to participate in corporate discovery. I began with the first theme to a rousing response; whenever I spoke of God's promises, his nature as healer and provider borrowing from Jewish themes, many would shout and use head movements to lend their approval. As a performer, the energy that one receives from the crowd is unmistakable. When I turned to theme two of devotion and sacrifice, however, the crowd's approval became noticeably absent. The once responsive and enthusiastic crowd had turned quiet, unresponsive and almost bored. Then again, as I concluded and returned

to the earlier theme of God's earthly provision, the crowd responded in verbal and bodily approval.

In my field reflection of this moment, I concluded that 'converts were far from passive subjects whose consciousness was being colonized by my words. They used their power as an approving or disapproving crowd to shape the message, pulling meaning toward their pragmatic needs. They were finding, within the paradox of earthy provision and sacrifice, their preferred meaning.'

Indian Pentecostals share a heavenly-focused hope with their missionary counterparts, but they emphasize a more pragmatic gospel of earthly provision. These pragmatic emphases are prominently expressed in relation to the work of the Holy Spirit as a powerful aid and a rival for evil spirits. AG Pentecostals embrace the convert's past understanding of physical hardship as the result of spiritual forces. The Holy Spirit is taught as the force that overcomes any negative spiritual effects of practiced Hinduism. They consider Hinduism as responsible for their struggles in sanctioning caste exclusion, and keeping them trapped in a cycle of witchcraft practice fear of the *Buri Nazar* (evil eye) and dependency upon oppressive *Pujaris (*temple priests*)*.

Teachings include, 'the Holy Spirit delivers you from all bondages and fear', the Holy Spirit is 'powerful to protect you from all evil powers', 'the Holy Spirit gives healing, and frees you from all curses' so that 'when the Holy Spirit reigns over us, there will be transformation in our lives', and 'hardships are the work of demons while baptism of the Holy Spirit is a higher power to help you'.

Finally, these pragmatic themes are seen in logics that explicitly promise earthly prosperity and wealth. AG adherents in Delhi hold on to promises of earthly benefit as a reward for converting and following Jesus. These logics are taught: 'God promises that His

people will have prosperity and health on the earth' because 'He provides us all that we need', 'if we have faith in Him, we will not lack anything', 'God will not let you lack any good thing', and 'God is not a debtor, whatever you give for Him, you will receive double-fold and more'.

These values are lived out and become socially concrete in everyday ethical and ritual practice to form 'exemplary representations' (Robbins 2015: 18-29). Ritual representations include most prominently the teachings of pastors, but also the lyrics of songs collectively performed and rituals of welcome in which prospective converts are socially embraced and celebrated.

Senior Pastor Vinod is a well studied theologian. He grew up in Tamil Nadu in a Muslim family. After, his own conversion worked for World Vision before heading to the AG affiliated Southern Asia Bible College in Bangalore. He along with Pastor Kapil went on to complete their Masters of Divinity from Oxford University.

When he stepped to the pulpit week after week in the same passion-filled congregation and told stories about the faithfulness of God, I understood that these were exactly the type of promises that the congregation desired. On one occasion he told his testimony. He started by explaining his Muslim upbringing and that changing from an Islamic school to a Christian school 'transformed' his life. He explained that, although 'very gradually' his 'family situation' began to change and their 'financial condition improved'. The crowd nodded their heads in approval. He then grounded his story in scripture telling the story of feeding of the 5,000 from John chapter six. He narrowed in on the experience of the crowd that followed Jesus, at times expanded the teaching beyond the text itself, saying, 'they desired to be cured or to receive a miracle', 'some may have followed to thank Jesus for something they already received', 'they were physically and mentally tired', and Jesus

'provided them what they needed'. He concluded, 'When we faithfully follow Jesus, he will never let us go hungry. He can multiply whatever we have to offer to him.'

Ritual representation is also found in the lyrics that congregants sing week after week. The song Showers of Blessing is a good example: *'Barkat ki baarish, Barkat ki baarish, avashya hai'*, (*showers of blessing)*. The translation is telling. Translators chose to translate blessing as *barkhat*, generally used in Hindi to indicate material blessings. Translators could have chosen *ashish,* used to denote blessings in general. While it could be that the translator simply preferred how *barkhat* sounded in the context of the song, it may also indicate agency toward pragmatic material blessings. Another example is an addition to the western version of the song, 'There is Power in the Name of the Lord'. The final verse, not present in the original western version of the song, is:

Ishu naam me rogon se mukti, (In the name of Jesus deliverance from sickness)
Ishu naam se hote hain adbhut kaam (In the name of Jesus miracles happen)
Ishu naam me rogon se mukti (In the name of Jesus deliverance from sickness)

It is clear that the Indian AG emphasizes healing, financial provision, and earthly wellbeing. They also teach and ritually express salvation as cleansing from past sins. The lived phenomenon of the AG that appeals to the chronically poor is demonstrated first in their ritual acts of social inclusion.

Sunday after Sunday, new special guests are welcomed. The act by a middle-class social group to embrace untouchables is a ritual that points to ethical convictions that are captured in the socially minded expression of AG doctrine. It is ritual performance that demonstrates the values of the group, rejecting untouchability.

After being welcome, *Dalits* sit and hear about a God of love, who accepts everyone, who will make you a new person and forgive your sins, will remedy your spiritual oppressions, heal your body, and multiply the good things of your life. These teachings are based upon doctrines of God's grace that accepts and cleanses the dirty and unworthy. They teach, 'we need to be born again of body and spirit' and it is 'by God's great love and shedding of blood, we all are washed' for 'we were unworthy but still God chose us'. 'Though we don't deserve anything, it's only by His grace we have everything'. Indian clergy emphasize being 'washed', being 'born again', or being 'chosen though unworthy.' It is not a stretch to conclude that Indian Pentecostals who overwhelmingly emerge from Dalit ranks find the earthy provision and made pure aspects of conversion or salvation appealing whereby a former sinner is cleansed and made an heir of God.

These themes of pragmatic wellbeing and social inclusion taught and ritually performed each week seem to be the preferred teachings of the audience; attractive to the chronically poor and socially excluded. Yet there is another set of logics where high levels of participation are required for the promised benefits to be fully realized. When prospective converts are first welcomed, the made pure gospel to which seekers subject themselves represents a good deal: a more powerful God, wealth, healing, and freedom from curses or possessions without the upfront fees that *pandits* or *Pujaris* demand.

Prior to baptism, the emphasized exchange logics change, and pastors begin to demand strict moral ethics, sacrificial dedication to their ministries, faithful attendance to church, and paying of tithes. This version of the prosperity gospel differs from other forms such as the faith gospel or health and wealth gospel (Haynes 2015, Hunt 2000). These versions only require giving as a demonstration of faith that allows them to receive 'divine blessings' (Wiegele 2005: 21). However, for AG Pentecostals, the required commitment extends far beyond financial donations. There is an expectation of complete commitment,

sacrifice, and willingness to endure hardship whereby one must stand firm in proper response to God.

A believer's relative level of performance is also taught to bring corresponding supernatural returns in the form of earthly benefits and eternal rewards. These rewards correspond with the aspirations of converts who desire security. However, these rewards come at a cost. There is a second set of requirements, later detailed in Chapter 7, that includes separation from the world, changing morality, leaving Hinduism, giving money and time, and participating in the ministry which is demanded in return.

Indian clergy emphasize different meanings and values paradoxically as they move Hindus toward participation, and, secondarily, participants toward full conversion. For example, one pastor might preach, 'Jesus will forgive you, heal you, bless you financially out of free grace, nothing required' and then the very next week preach, 'you should expect hardship in the world and submit everything to God and not turn back, even if you do not receive your answer to prayer'. Given that some justification is available from the text for a range of possible meanings, valuing one meaning over the other is not challenged as logically inconsistent.

Slippages?

Given my 20 plus years of participation in the AG as an ordained minister, I was struck by how different the emphasis of the Indian Pentecostals were to my own. I am familiar with of the broad spectrum of prosperity gospel logics prevalent in Charismatic teaching. Yet, the mainstream of AG USA teachers steer away from the prosperity gospel, especially its extreme logics, and focus instead on the eternal aspects of salvation and the ethical

demands related to following the example Jesus.[34] When I asked about salvation as part of my missionary interviews, every missionary spoke about salvation in terms of heaven and eternal life. Whereas American missionaries emphasize eternal salvation and saved souls, their Indian counterparts preach more of a prosperity gospel that offers hope in this life rather than the next.

The differences are clear. Indians preach a particular sort of prosperity gospel that operates according to karma logics and results in a different set of knowledge from missionary conceptions of conversion. I could not find a single missionary that agreed with the idea that God's earthly or eternal blessings were tied *quid quo pro* to the level of commitment of the converts. They rejected out of hand that earthly troubles would follow those who failed to attend church or pay their tithes. They also mostly disagreed with the idea that eternal life is threatened if a Christian sins.

These differences related to how different Hindu depictions of the afterlife are, especially their conceptions of Hell. Modern American Pentecostals rarely teach the fire and brimstone messages of holiness preachers that dominated the movement from its inception to the 1970's and 80'. There has been a general move away from any hell and judgement in favour of emphasizing grace. Conceptions of hell are somewhat vague, a place of separation from God, darkness, and unquenchable fire.

Hindu conceptions are, on the other hand, detailed. The Karma logics of Hinduism extend beyond this current life into their conceptions of hell with the envisioned punishment directly relates to one's sins committed on earth. *Karni Bharni* images enforce this moral code by depicting the likely payments for actions after death. Similar to Jesus' teachings that we will reap what we sow, the apocalyptic punishments of *Karam ke Phal* (fruit of action) are

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[34] In recent years AG teachers in the USA increasingly embrace a self-help teaching where congregants are encouraged toward a more fulfilled life, a sort of Christian therapy from the pulpit.

visually displayed in horrific tortures which are mimesis of the offences. Various Hindu *Puranas* (religious texts) claim over 80,000 hells, with 21 principle ones that are specifically designed to punish different specific sins in order to bring balance of the good and bad. The punishments range from fire, to insects, birds, snakes, and various metal tools designed to torture the damned (Pinney 2018).

The logics of contagion and pollution from *shudras* (low caste) and women underlie conceptions of hell. The concept of mimetic contagion elaborated in the *Bhagavata Purana* provides a template for punishment for the antidote to and protection from evil (Pinney 2018: 84). 'The body of the sinner becomes a sacrificial site on which the misdeed is repeated and hence symbolically negated' (Pinney 2018: 89). Those who fail to practice Hinduism (give gifts to Brahmins, penance, fire sacrifice, *pujas*, *dev* worship, and respect for the Ganges) and those who are not good neighbours, fail to follow the s*hastras* (rules) and *vedas* (sacred instruction) or make their community better are warned by these conceptions of punishment.

Hindu conceptions of hell are very different from AG Pentecostal conceptions in which there is one hell without detailed memitic depictions of punishment, but instead a vague picture of a terrible place (lake of fire, darkness, separation from God). They also emphasize forgiveness through faith in Jesus to free believers of their sinful nature. They share the legal ideas of a court of righteousness where sinners will be judged. They see the solution not in karmic balance but through substitutionary atonement.

The key difference for the purpose of this study lies in the underpinning logic of the entire system. *Samsarik* logic that emphasizes pollution, contagion, and lower caste birth is the result of past sins within the cycle of rebirths. Karmic justice legitimizes hierarchies of dominance and subordination and the dangers of pollution. The intrinsic social expression of this divine accounting is a class of socially excluded impure that rightfully are dominated by

the high caste or pure (Pinney 2018: 90). The *Karni Bharni* images celebrate 'higher-caste morality and the reaffirmation of hierarchy' (Pinney 2018: 92).

It is not surprising that the Indian AG participants emphasize the elements of being washed and made pure and are more likely to connect earthly actions with eternal outcomes than USA missionaries. Coming from *Dalit-Bahujan* (the oppressed and marginalized) backgrounds, these new congregants likely celebrate the emancipation from both an eventual hell and the everyday hell of Hindu sanctioned oppression.

Paradox and Contestation

Pentecostal Christianity is amenable to localization and at the same time durable as a homogeneous global phenomenon. In seeking to identify slippages, it is not enough to ask if Indian clergy and their congregations hold to the AG doctrines, because they do. Rather, the question is, 'how do Indian AG participants order their lives according to knowledge that they have discovered?' As we have seen, localizations of Christianity are emergent and constantly developing according to situations, experiences, and previous actualizations. It is therefore differing values in the receiving community that organize relations between ideas and produce different meanings, perhaps hybrid meanings.

Indians share the emphasized missionary logics of a loving Jesus saving souls to heaven, the importance of the great commission, the demonization of Hinduism, and the benefits of the Holy Spirit. Yet they also appropriate these parts of the canon somewhat differently and emphasize other parts that missionaries do not. Not only does AG missionary strategy embrace local expressions, their doctrinal canon allows for multiple 'orthodox' appropriations. A key factor in the chameleon success of the global Pentecostal movement

is its doctrinal paradoxes that allow for wide and varied, sometimes nearly opposite, meanings. It may be a condition of Christianity more generally that contradictions act not as sources of disequilibrium but are sustained and important to the religion (Irvine 2016). Regardless, in the case of AG missionary venture of establishing indigenous churches globally, they are important to the religion's success.

The following paradoxes are the cleavages in AG knowledge that are relevant for the localizing of the gospel in Delhi. These are doctrinal truths, sourced from the Sixteen Fundamental Truths, the AG's core doctrinal canon, that provide authoritative ground to support competing values.

The first set of doctrines value both the embrace of the world and simultaneously the hope to escape from it. According to Cannell (2006), this is a central paradox within Christianity that follows from the theological ramifications of incarnation (Jesus coming to the world) and resurrection (Jesus leaving the world). This story centres on one hand around a God who loves the world and sends Jesus (God in the flesh) to redeem and restore it into alignment with God's design. Jesus is described as fully man in the AG canon, which suggests that a creation embracing God is oriented towards everyday life issues that affect mankind on earth, including peace and social justice. On the other hand, the resurrection and 'exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of God' signals an otherworldly spiritual priority. Then again, within the eschatological doctrines, there is a return to the back and forth between heaven and earth. The second coming and rapture of the church in which humans are taken up to heaven with Jesus point to an otherworldly escape while the millennial reign of Christ on the earth returns to more world embracing themes. AG churches in one context may interpret the text as underpinning a high value of eternal escape toward political malaise in waiting for Jesus to return, and then, in another, the same text may be used to underpin a competing value of social justice or a version of the prosperity gospel that

focuses on earthly health and wealth.

The second paradox lies in the emphasis on both grace and works in which salvation is cast as both 'substitutionary atonement' and as 'sanctification' over time. The fall of man is understood by two concepts: transgression and separation from a Holy God that cannot be in relationship with impure humans and therefore requires propitiation. Jesus' substitutionary legal work on the cross is thought of as fully paying the penalty for our sins. The dominant late American emphasis, however, has been upon grace, unmerited favour, a free gift of God. God requires only a mental ascent to doctrines about God understood as faith. AG doctrine also forwards a secondary work of purification as evidenced by moral change so that salvation is understood as redemption, washing, regeneration, justification and worthiness of God's heirs, and as such solves man's impurity problem in pragmatic terms over time. In this logic, true saving faith results in a changed life or the demonstration of works that is the proof and manifestation of one's salvation. If one claims to be a Christian and be saved, then one is also expected to participate in rituals, conform to AG morality, reject other religious affiliations, and identify solely with Jesus. The ultimate freedom given by Jesus' work on the cross comes with the ultimatum that those who achieve freedom must identify with and submit to the church view of a biblical life. In one context, Pentecostals prioritize internal beliefs, intellectual processes, and corresponding rituals in which discipleship is focused on orthodoxy. Purity is paramount and strict moral and ethical behaviour is demanded. Preachers both proclaim the righteousness and purity of seekers through the free work of Jesus and simultaneously demand commitment and moral change.

The third paradox concerns God's provision for mankind and sacrificial giving that is expected from Christians. Here, God loves and sacrifices for mankind and demonstrates this through earthly provision, however, converts must love God and sacrifice their lives to him in return thereby demonstrating authentic commitment. This paradox is seen in Christian

doctrines related to the ordinances of water baptism, the Eucharist, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit followed by sanctification. On one hand, there are themes of God's grace and provision described in various doctrinal phrases, including, 'Jesus' body was broken for us', 'Jesus gave himself up for us', and the 'Holy spirit is God's gift for an empowered life'. These are each expressions of God's commitment to mankind. Conversely, doctrines include required sacrifice and commitment from followers, such as, 'we must also die to ourselves' and 'we must live a sanctified life'. AG followers believe in both a God of love and God to be feared. Jesus loved and gave himself up for mankind, but he is also a judge who will punish and send those who are unrighteous to an eternal hell of suffering. The result is that in one context AG churches may value above all else sacrificial commitment to God and others they may value receiving.

These examples are not exhaustive and perhaps theologians would disagree with my analysis that they are paradoxical. These sets of contradictory doctrines open up a great many potential interpretations for teachers and listeners; a variety of possible formulations where a group might elevate a value from the extreme or produce endless nuanced positions between the extremes.

Conclusion

Framing gospel knowledge as a commodity opens up an analysis that leads to the localizing of meaning as marketing and consumption. I have categorized AG doctrine within the wider Christian landscape, outlined the AG missionary strategy that allows for contextualization and self-theologizing, discussed knowledge transmission through the lens of power relations, and described the AG bible college as the principle tool of hegemonic assurance of doctrinal homogeneity. I then traced the preferred appropriated meanings of Indian AG

believers that correlate with their desire for inclusion and security and discussed the areas of slippage where Indian truth varies from missionaries' truth, and argued that this represents a subtle contestation and localization where mimicry produces a reordering of values and categories in accordance with local predilections. I argue that doctrinal paradoxes make AG Pentecostalism especially amenable to travel to new contexts as new logics allow for localized expression within the wide swath of orthodox offerings.

Chapter 4

Made Pure Embrace Exchange

Introduction

A primary focus of the Anthropology of Christianity is 'the process of conversion and the play of motivations, incentives, inducements, encouragements, directives and constraints operating among the various actors in a history of pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial contexts' (Joshi 2012: 7). In the first chapter, I documented the multiple arguments that have been posited by anthropologists regarding why Hindus convert in India. Most of these focus on deprivation and argue that converts lack something that they hope conversion will provide, normally pragmatic inducements. Others argue that Hindus convert to Christianity to reorder their lives, for instance in the case of displaced rural migrants to urban settings (Robbins 2004b) through active and exciting participatory church communities and rituals (Corten 1999). Other prominent arguments include those that understand conversion as a political protest or attraction to egalitarian values (Synan 1997).

The hardships of converts prior to conversion and their appropriation of the gospel according to their aspirations indicates the pragmatic appeal of Pentecostalism. This is often analyzed as a 'rice Christian' phenomenon in which the poor are induced by conquering missionaries with basic necessities or political protest in a revolt against structural oppression. Yet the life histories of AG converts challenge these straightforward explanations. First, in none of the histories are missionaries even mentioned, and certainly nothing like converting to receive foreign support. The only possible exception, as mentioned in Chapter 3, may be bible college students who are sent to college by pastors during financial hardship or when they have no other job opportunities. Their room, board,

education, and support as a church planter after graduation are partly covered by missionary donations. However, this is not conversion in exchange for support. Neither did converts talk about a feminist or Dalit political revolt. Rather, what unfolds is a complex relational process in which converts adopt the values and social identities of the AG overtime. The conversion career (Lofland and Stark 1965; Gooren 2010) elements below are presented in the order in which they normally fall in the oral histories that I collected. However, converts' experiences result in varying degrees of social and psychological transformation that are not always unidirectional, nor temporally consistent.

The foundational argument that will inform the chapters to follow is that the AG global missionary enterprise can be broken down into a series of exchanges. This may appear to be seeing 'markets in everything' (Graeber 2000). However, envisioning the gospel mission through this lens offers an expanded toolkit to analyze Pentecostal proselytizing mission. The first of these exchanges occurs when Hindu prospective converts decide to attend church and participate in the AG community in exchange for being socially welcomed and encouraged with promises that the Holy Spirit would heal, deliver, and/or provide for their needs in relation to their commitment and faithfulness.

Later, I will argue that missionaries commoditize the stories of these converts in their fundraising efforts. Explored in the final section of this thesis, commoditized conversion stories are sold to donors by missionaries. They are valued and exchanged for other objects of value (money, social rewards, participation, rupture) and are defined in a uniform and standardized way (eternal life, welcome, security). They are distinguished in type and valued differently accordingly (unreached people groups (UPGs), trafficking victim, orphan), and they are valued somewhat independently of who produces or consumes them.

I am not arguing that commodification occurs with the conversion exchanges as

ideas and actions are not transformed into 'objects of economic value' (Appadurai 1996: 3). Commodities can be conceptualized as anything that is traded or purchased, the value of which is dependent on how it is exchanged. However, it is not technically accurate to suggest that there is a commodification because neither the bundles of meanings offered to seekers by AG clergy, nor the faithfulness of new converts, have definable economic value.

Yet the spiritual, psychological, social, economic, and physical benefits that converts seek are, to them, extremely valuable, and their participation and eventual authentic conversion that results in church expansion is also valuable to Indian churches for financial and social rewards. The economic theoretical framework continues to be useful in understanding the exchanges. In this analysis, I follow Appadurai who advises 'looking at the commodity potential of all things rather than searching fruitlessly for the magic distinction between commodities and other sorts of things' (1996: 14). The focus of examination is the exchange and how the desires of trading partners are reciprocally filled by sacrifice; an 'exchange of sacrifices' (ibid 1996: 3). In this sense, the value of a given commodity does not directly flow from the object itself but is rather a matter of judgment, which is determined in exchange. The question of enquiry, then, is not so much about the product or producer but about the exchange itself (ibid 1996: 9).

Given that AG participants normally characterize their proselytizing and fundraising in terms of gifts, it is helpful to employ an analysis using economic principles of culturally situated rational maximization as well as principles of gift reciprocity. Rather than theorizing the difference between gifts and commodities (Gregory 1982) we can use theoretical examination for commodities and gifts. Bourdieu argued that both gifts and commodities have a commonality of spirit, as gifts only give the appearance of not conforming to self-interest because the time that lapses between gift transactions clouds the reality of its contractual and rational qualities (1977). So, I will argue that conversion is a process with

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two central exchanges between converts and AG churches.

I argue in Chapter 7 that though the salvation that results from the conversion exchanges is communicated as a gift, the AG gospel offering is never free but part of a reciprocal exchange (Mauss 1990). Mauss raises the central question, 'what power resides in the object given that causes its recipient to pay it back?' (1990: 3) and concludes that the gift is a 'total prestation' imbued with a 'spiritual mechanism' so that 'the objects are never completely separated from the men who exchange them' (1990: 31). In the conversion exchanges, converts enjoy the benefits of participation and security for the cost of being faithful authentic believers. The gift of welcome and salvation carries a spirit and is connected to the giver with an expectation of payment. These are exchanges of sacrifices.

These exchanges create social bonds and social debt so that to fail to reciprocate would mean a loss of honour and status by breaking the relational and social conventions that include giving, receiving, and reciprocating. So, exchange also leads to mutual interdependence between partners. The mutual interdependency that results according to the 'spirit of the gift' (ibid) is demonstrated in solidarity and social cohesion, which might be understood as the basis of the AG global network as it spreads across the globe from small town Mississippi to the metros of India. For 'what really matters is the relations between the people; exchange is about creating friendships, or working out rivalries, or obligations, and only incidentally about moving around valuable goods' (Graeber 2000).

A further distinction is helpful. Gifts may also be understood as relational goods that are 'not standard, mostly not physical, and not exchanged in markets.' [35] Rather, 'relational goods derive their value from their ability to satisfy socio-emotional needs. In contrast to commodities, the value of relational goods depends on who produces them, who consumes

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[35] Robison et al. (2015: 15) list several examples including land (Xu et al. 2009), art (Freedman 1993), relationships (Healey 2008), culture (Harvey 2009), and history (Dillon 2007; Van Kooy 2012).

them, and under what conditions they are exchanged' (Robison et al. 2015: 3). The inter-relational affective aspects of relational goods appear to capture what is going on in the Pentecostal network of exchanges to be described. So, I do not argue that the gospel is bundled and traded similarly to iPhones or Levi's, but rather valued as relational goods.

In the exchanges of the conversion experience, I set up an enquiry into how the gospel circulates between the various actors of the AG missionizing effort to provide 'glimpses of the ways in which desire and demand, reciprocal sacrifice and power interact to create economic (and symbolic) value in specific social situations' (Appadurai 1996: 4). The exchange and valuing of the gospel also expose how scarcity and utility are determined by demand. These are 'things [that] have no meanings apart from those that human transactions, attributions and motivation endow them with' (ibid 1996: 5).

In this chapter, I explore the first exchange that corresponds to the localized gospel meanings that are commoditized into a set of knowledge that I call the Made Pure Embrace (MPE), which is based in teachings of pragmatic emancipation from worldly oppression. The MPE is offered to Hindus with free gift and made pure logics by only requiring a Hindu to participate or attend. This exchange is grounded in AG Indian values demonstrated in logics like the following:

~ Jesus loves and accepts you just as you are and will cleanse you,

~ The Holy Spirit is powerful and will heal you and provide for you,

~ You are welcome both to the Sunday service but also to our homes,

~ The pastor will pray for you and you can receive his prayers even without putting money in the offering,

~ The Holy Spirit works as evidenced by how the AG community, and even the pastor, were once in poverty and/or previously faced difficulties, but now they are doing well, and

~ Full benefits will be realized after you take baptism and stop participating in Hinduism which is evil and the source of your problems.

These logics are preached from the pulpit, but they are also delivered through relational coaching between the laity and their friends, neighbours, and co-workers. Laity are the key relational bridge, with nearly every convert I interviewed reporting a former relational connection prior to attending. They were invited to church on Sundays, but they also attended arranged meetings in the homes of their AG friends. This non-ritual space provides a more comfortable atmosphere to introduce new prospects to the pastor and to conduct AG rituals, especially praying for the needs of prospects. In this way, the laity are mainly responsible for the first stage of the conversion process which consists of the social inclusion of prospective converts into the AG church community and teaching MPE logics to their friends and families.

In the MPE exchange, the laity compel Hindus through rituals of welcome and promises of the Holy Spirit's healing provision. Indian pastors take a pivotal role of soothing the fears that converts have related to on-going participation. In this stage, which occurs prior to baptism and rupture, prospective converts enjoy the benefits of participating in the AG community including free-of-charge prayer and healing/exorcism, Holy Spirit rituals, and pragmatic assistance toward socio-economic uplift without being required to outwardly profess Christianity or leave Hinduism. This group of participants is sometimes referred to as 'contacts' by pastors because they are distinguished from 'baptized believers' and exist in a state of religious, sometimes crypto-religious, liminality where they belong but do not yet believe, commit, or profess.

The empirical data for this chapter comes from two primary sources. First, I have selected eight examples that represent 30 oral histories of first generation Christians that I recorded during my fieldwork. These histories represent the responses to a single open-ended question, 'Tell me your story', and, as such, provide insight into what converts themselves view as important about their conversion path. I will use these histories to

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outline the prominent elements of the conversion process. Second, I use the responses of detailed interviews that were subsequently conducted to analyze the oral histories, which narrowed specifically on motivations that drive conversion acts. Key interlocutors, including several Indian pastors, assisted me in defining the most prominent elements that are consistently reported within their congregations.

The first generation converts that I interviewed reported the following elements of the conversion process. Though heterogeneity does exist in the stories that were gathered, it is rare. The following general elements represent the vast majority of AG conversions in Delhi. I have organized the elements temporally following the natural flow of the oral histories or testimonies that include converts' pre-conversion, conversion, and post-conversion realities.

Relational Bridges and Social Inclusion

The first element of the conversion process involves an initial contact or introduction to AG Pentecostalism. Pentecostals in Delhi practice promotion of special meetings, including at times healing meetings, mostly by distributing printed materials to churches. There are also several Christian personalities that can be seen on cable channels like God TV, which broadcasts a range of western and Indian evangelical preachers and claims it can reach 92.6 million homes in India (Telford 2015). It is personal relationships that continually are reported by converts as making the difference. It has been argued that Pentecostal expansion has been largely driven by social inclusion of those who have been disenfranchised by the modern, neoliberal, global economy (Robbins 2009).

In his study on middle-class conservative evangelicals in Tennessee, Elisha describes evangelicals as focusing on relationship building as a key component of

conversion, as well as familiarizing themselves with a particular place when engaging in missional activities (2008). Haynes describes the Christian audience as a collection of groups and actors, but also potentially anyone that one encounters and more abstractly, anyone in the world. This is important for evangelical Christians who place emphasis on how one acts in front of non-believers, which is a form of apologetics (Haynes 2014).

Bielo describes evangelicals as engaging in rituals that support relational faith to achieve community (2012). This presents an apt description of the AG in India's first stage of conversion, which is the building of relationships and a sense of belonging. In the north Indian context, relationships, not doctrine, compels Indians at the first stage of conversion.

AG converts in Delhi that I spoke to, in nearly every case, reported an existing personal relationship with an AG lay member rather than exposure to Christian television, large crusades, or missionaries as significant in their introduction to the AG. It is the relational connection between an existing AG attender or believer who invites the prospective convert to attend a church meeting, evangelistic event, or meeting with the pastor. These church members recommend giving Jesus, the church, and Christianity a 'try' as well as meeting their pastor. So, the conversion process amongst AG converts in Delhi is consummated and church growth is driven by personal relational connections and the evangelistic fervour (Cox 1995) that is expressed by non-clergy members (Willems 1967). This aligns with Smilde's conclusion with regard to evangelical conversion in Venezuela, where he links social networks to conversion outcomes. He says, 'religious conversion strongly depends on network location. Having a network link to Evangelicalism is perhaps the most effective cause of conversion' (Smilde 2007: 219).

Priti is a good example, she and her family are Hindu background scheduled caste. She was born in Delhi from a lower middle-class street in South Delhi where a friend from

her neighbourhood invited her to attend church. She said she was initially scared when she witnessed people worshiping and speaking tongues. She attributed her friend of clearing her 'many doubts'. She said speaking of his dedication and encouragement, 'He used to call me to his place for prayer and his family taught me how to pray. And I regularly attended church.'

Sometimes these lay believers do more than just invite and follow up with other clerical offerings. This conforms to the Pentecostal doctrine of the priesthood of all believers where prayer, counselling, and teaching as well as other ministry are the mandate of each church member.

Varindra demonstrates that, for some, church attendance comes after significant ministerial work by an AG lay-member. The 29-year-old identified as a mixture of two caste groups, *Vaniyar* and *Gowndar*.[36] He was not a newcomer to the Tamil service pastored by Vinod. As he put it, he first 'heard about Jesus in 1998 and was not baptized until 2004'. His story is typical, low caste and devoted Hindu. He said, 'I believed in all gods, I would worship *matha tekna*', or the bowing of one's head; 'even from outside wherever I would see a temple' he would bow. He was a street fighter who was in and out of jail on assault charges. He attended a prayer meeting conducted by Central Bible College students with his mother and sister but was a 16-year-old troublemaker that did not take it seriously. He said he would make fun of the prayers, look at the girls and then go home. He then had what he called a 'tragic event' and was sent to jail on a 'half murder[37] case, for hitting a schoolboy, and was released on bail'. His mother begged him to go get prayer. Interestingly, instead of calling the pastor or asking one of the bible college students to pray, she took him to a lay believer. He recalled 'she took me to a sister's house who was the church believer,

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[36] Gounder and Vanniyar are known as backward class (BC) and Most Backward class (MBD) Backward Class (BC) of Tamilnadu.
[37] An unsuccessful attempted murder or severe beating.

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and she prayed for me, she gave me a bible, and asked me to read it, I argued with her and said, all gods are one, till now nothing has changed me further too I am not going to change. But she said just read this for a week'. He continued to read the bible, found it interesting, and made gradual changes slowly attending church 'irregularly'. He then had yet another jail sentence on a different case and 'after coming out I again started to attend church, this time I was regular'. He moved through the entire conversion process when he stopped 'believing in other gods' and 'stopped going to temples'. Varendra's mother's friend was the key relational link to bring about participation and eventually full commitment.

Relational connections between proselytizing church members and new converts also help smooth the transition of converts into AG communities by introducing prospects to the wider group, bringing them to church, and coaching them through their initial experiences. Social theorists have correlated conviction, commitment, and connection by suggesting that religious beliefs lead to strong social bonds (Durkheim 1995). Robbins points out that the etymological meaning of the word religion is 'to bind' and encapsulates the sense that to believe is to belong (Robbins 2015). Their shared ritual and lived experiences lead them to seeing the world the same way over time so that belonging becomes constitutive of believing, just as shared beliefs lead to strong bonds. The key relational connection that I observe in this regard is with the pastor.

The Importance of the Pastor

The pastor plays a key role in the process of building social bonds for prospective converts. For most converts, such as Arvind who participated in church for several years prior to his conversion, the pastor's involvement helped him toward full faith adoption. This quote came prior to his miracle and baptism elements:

'Church has helped me in all my troubles. Pastor has helped me a lot, from my dressing sense to the way I talk, now is all because of Pastor. Once when I was disappointed Pastor told me, "God is with you." That always encourages me, Jesus is my father, His grace is with me. I was stuck in very difficult circumstances, severe tragedies, even when I was paralyzed for six months, but Christ has raised me.'

The most straightforward way for laity to integrate their Hindu friends is to invite them to a Sunday morning ritual where they are enthusiastically welcomed. Every Sunday morning includes a formal welcome of newcomers. This includes recognition of first-time visitors who are both introduced informally prior to the meeting and then formally recognized from the stage. They are typically asked to stand and state their name. This is followed by applause from the congregation as an expression of welcome and acceptance. The goal is to have them quickly integrated into the community; some pastors make a public invitation for the newcomers to join the church.

A common method that lay people use to introduce new Hindu prospects to the pastor and to AG ritual life is by arranging meetings in their homes. Senior Pastor Vinod invited me to accompany him to a family and friends gathering to commemorate the anniversary of the grandfather's passing. I had also attended birthday parties that, as in this occasion, rapidly turned into ritual performances that mirrored a Sunday morning service.

He picked me up in his recently purchased, with help from the congregation, sedan. The car was the nicest I had noticed on Sunday mornings where his middle- to lower-middle-class crowd attended church. The church seemed to take pride in their pastor having nice things and was willing to sacrifice to provide him a car that was better than what they drove. We arrived at a very small rented flat on the third level of a government apartment complex. The higher levels were the least expensive because of the difficulty to keep them

cool during the summer months. The crowded space made it difficult to find parking. We were late, which was somewhat expected for *bara log* (big people). Junior Pastor Samson waited on the street for us to arrive. He helped us park and then directed Vinod, whom he addressed as Pastor, to the correct building. He had been here for some time helping the family make arrangements and organize the event. During my time in Delhi, I was in on-going contact with Samson and other junior pastors that seemingly never had time off. As we climbed the stairs, a teenager from the family, who helped Samson in assuring that the pastor was properly escorted to the house, greeted us. We walked through the entrance and were quickly taken to a side room. The walls were whitewashed concrete. There was a television and several small decorator items, a few of which had Christian significance, including a poster with a cross and a bible verse. There were no Hindu materials, photos or posters of gods, statues, incense bowls, or red *malas* (a ring of flowers) that typically adorn Indian front rooms.

We sat in plastic chairs specially arranged to accommodate the senior pastor. I overheard a string of voices from the hallway saying that the pastor had arrived. Only the father of the household who nervously instructed those who served us sat with us. Just before the food was served, Samson along with another junior pastor joined us. The remaining guests, around 40, were seated on the roof of the apartment and, at this point, out of our view. After a few greetings, we were served rice, chicken biryani, curd, and roti by one of the household girls. There was very little conversation, and only if Vinod or I initiated talking. We ate heartily, taking only minutes to finish our first plate only to be quickly served a second, followed by dessert. The junior pastors left the room, and I was alone with the senior pastor. We sat for 15 or so minutes before being escorted by Samson up the stairs to the roof. We entered from the rear of the crowd who was sitting in rows facing the other junior pastor, who was leading the group in singing. We walked down the centre aisle to a

row of chairs at the front of the room facing the crowd. Only us and the two junior pastors were seated in chairs, the others were crammed into the small balcony sitting on the floor with legs crossed. After a few songs, a prayer was led by Samson, delivered with the normal fervour of all AG meetings. He spoke with urgency, with passion, earnestly asking God for blessing. He was convincing in that one could imagine that if God were visibly present, the asker would take a similar tone. Vinod stood to deliver a sermon. Another prayer followed the short 10-minute message for the occasion. Then, Vinod and I rose to excuse ourselves and walked back down the aisle, through the house, and back to the car. The father of the house said, 'we know that you are too busy to stay', as we thanked him for the dinner a final time.

Converts reported that the most important new relationship is their embrace by the pastor. Maintaining the hegemonic status of Hindu religious mediators facilitates and bolsters the process of pastors being introduced to and embracing new prospects. As most pastors also come from similar backgrounds as converts, they become powerful icons of hope.

Cutler has described two themes in Hindu cosmology including a 'mystical state of being' and God as personal (Waghorne et al. 1996). The embodiment of God in images and human forms continues as central features of Hinduism. The embodiment of gods in Hinduism generally demonstrates a desire to bring the transcendent closer, more visible, or tangible to the worshiper (1996). The images act as a mode of perception as 'the embodied image of God is simply a point at which the worshiper perceives the contiguity, indeed the identity, of the empirical and divine realms' (1996: 163). Pastors make the presence of God accessible to converts as the connection point to the Holy Spirit, offering converts unique inter-subjective experiences that render their aspirations attainable and God's power accessible in familiar forms. These replacement roles include taking on a high-status

position, being an unquestioned voice, and providing daily guidance. They also involve being an embodied expression of God similar to, and perhaps replacing, *Brahmins*, the priestly caste; *gurus*, religious and theological teachers representing specific traditions; *pandits*, who enrich knowledge of the Vedic scriptures, are less specialized than *gurus* but are thought to possess higher levels of wisdom and typically provide practical advice; and *idols* of Hinduism. These perform various rites of passage, teach on Hindu scripture, and are highly venerated within Indian society as sources of knowledge, connected to gods and spirits.

Hegemonic Purity

North Indian AG church gatherings are designed to highlight the performance aspects of worship and speaking. They maintain two distinct spaces for two groups within a large viewing area. Often there are rows of chairs facing an elevated stage that is furnished with a drum set, amplifiers and guitars, and a lectern set front and centre. Pastors normally have special seats at the front, enjoy the cool air from a fan, and are served bottled water. These varying degrees of spatial separation and elevation are highly symbolically hegemonic. Thrones are elevated for pastors while congregants sit below, marking their lower status and importance. A normal chair is placed at the front, sometimes to the side, reserved for men of God who are deserving of honour due to their special roles, ensuring that rituals and prayers are effective.

Bialecki observes that the Vineyard movement, which emphasizes pedagogy, differs from the new apostolic revival, which emphasizes governance. The Vineyard movement, for instance, uses John Wimber, their founder, as an example of practice rather than as an authority figure (Bialecki 2016). While the apostolic third wave movements understood

charisma as a permanent marker of hierarchy, Wimber saw the power of the Holy Spirit as available to each believer through pedagogy. In the Indian AG, both logics operate. Pastors assume a clear distinction, set apart from the laity, while simultaneously teaching that spiritual gifts are available for everyone.

As the custodians of God, knowledge, and intermediaries between the eternal-spiritual-sacred and the physical-profane, AG pastors hold the highest social place, similar to the *Brahmins* of *Vedic* society. AG pastors in Delhi do not conform to egalitarian descriptions of Pentecostal organizations elsewhere (Willems 1967; Martin 2001). Neither do they conform to Pentecostal theological ideals of egalitarian and participatory congregations (see Volf 1998). Rather, they conform to Indian convert expectations of spiritual mediation and offer replacement icons for these worshipers. The deifying of a pastor therefore places him above and holy (Dumont 1982), but also useful and practical to converts' journeys, and act as a re-inscription of the caste system as ordered by holiness. D'Epinay makes a similar observation in describing Chilean Pentecostals, 'Pentecostalism offers the population an attractive substitute society, because it relates back to the known model and at the same time renews it' (1969: 38). 'The pastor's function puts him at a distance from church members by endowing him in their eyes with a high reputation, and the manner in which he exercises command is manifestly authoritarian' (1969: 95). Likewise, the AG churches of Delhi reproduce something similar to a *Varna* system in which the *Brahmin* or *clergy* caste holds the top position. Perhaps within the hierarchal society of India (Dumont 1980), the separation between the clergy and the laity is magnified. Furthermore, unlike American AG clergy from the West, Indian pastors need not put on airs of egalitarianism.

The high-class habitus (Bourdieu 1977) of the Indian clergy in Delhi is clearly reflected in the way they carry themselves and speak. They display mannerisms and clothing of high-class Indians and generally have the best English language skills. They also

have real lifestyle separation from most of their congregations. Compared to their parishioners, they often drive the nicest vehicles, are far more likely to have travelled abroad, and are more likely to have western friends (normally missionaries). They enjoy sharing in a cosmopolitan outlook, discussing world events, popular western movies, and music, especially Christian bands and well-known evangelical public speakers. These men of God normally have multiple western style business suits or sports coats, book collections, flat screen TVs, apple computers, and servants.

My initial meeting with pastor Irwan serves as an example. I reached out via email explaining what I was up to and he was very eager. Irwan is the pastor in what used to be an adjoining town of Faridabad that has now become a suburb of South Delhi as the city has grown to envelope the surrounding areas. This expanding region is know as the national capital region (NCR) and has its own development plan that encompasses a total population estimated at over 45 million. Pastor Irwan's church, like Kapil's, was started as a small group in the 1970's as an outreach. Irwan, like Kapil and Vinod, started working under the AG leader in North India, the general superintendent, who has held the position for nearly 40 years in the north west region, pastors an English-speaking congregation and is the president of Central Bible College along with holding or controlling every notable position of power in the AG system. So, most of the churches.[38]

He set up a meeting place via text at a four-star hotel on the border between South Delhi and Faridabad. We had a very nice lunch together, quite expensive. We spent the first 30 minutes catching up. I had not spent a lot of time with him during my missionary days, but he was aware that I had quit my assignment as a missionary. I was generally aware of his ministry. I had visited a couple of times over the years and had heard about his success.

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[38] Notable exception are some churches started by missionaries from Kerala and subsequent branch works. Although, there is one political body the Malayam pastors operate somewhat independently and start churches with the assumed blessing from the General superintendent who is Tamil.

He was known as the Indian pastor that missionaries and American church pastors most trusted to carry out the vision that they were funding. He is sharp, smart, and very western in his speech, demeanor, and humour. I thought as we talked, this is someone that I would enjoy spending time with. He told me of his many projects and his fundraising trip to the USA as well as to Singapore. His recently constructed set of buildings, including a small bible college of his own and a complex for his various compassion outreaches, were clear signs that he was well funded. It was no surprise then that he offered to pay for lunch. I thought about my years as a fundraising missionary and how I also always preferred paying when eating out with a donor pastor. I never want to come off as a beggar, and I thought that paying was a sign of my success, which I knew was attractive to donors. So, I agreed and was thankful because the bill was over 2,000 rupees, the equivalent to 20 GBP.

As we left the hotel, we both waited for our cars to be brought by the valet. They came at the same time. I was driving a 15-year old Subaru that was visibly beaten up.[39] His car, on the other hand, was a new and clean middle- to high-end sedan. There was a brief moment of awkwardness followed by him saying, 'you really need get a new car'. I laughed and noticed that he was somewhat ashamed. We were by all appearances two successful businessmen eating lunch at a high-end hotel, and now my old, poorly kept car lowered our collective social standing. Like a *Brahmin* or a successful spiritual leader in India, for Irwan, the material markers of success in a consumption based social hierarchy were important.

This positioning is tied to purity. Similar to the food restrictions of the *Brahmins*, pastors are expected to be more holy than the laity. They cannot attend movies, drink alcohol, or partake in other worldly enjoyments. However, they do cheat. On a particular amusing occasion, I attended a movie theatre with two senior pastors. As we entered, a girl

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[39] I used to drive back in the day and had given to a friend when I left India. My friend was letting me use it while I was doing research.

approached and said with surprise, 'Pastor, what are you doing here?' He quickly came back with the same questioning accusation. She responded, 'Pastor, I work here as security'. He embarrassingly said he was accompanying me. The three of us laughed in reflection as we reached our seats. His worldliness had been exposed. Although not as extreme as a Hindu renouncer *Sadhu*, where all worldly pursuits are forbidden, AG pastors in Delhi must demonstrate a more holy and pure lifestyle than the converts in their churches.

A pastor's purity is necessary to ensure effectiveness at bringing the Holy Spirit's power in the lives of his/her congregants. The prayer of the holy is considered more likely to be answered than one of a sinner or worldly person. Converts often encourage each other in times of need by saying, 'when the pastor prays you will get better'. The senior pastor's blessing is coveted: a touch on the head after a meeting or a special prayer for finances, health, wisdom, or good grades soothes converts and is sometimes even delivered via telephone. As Pastor *Ji*'s, these men, separated from the common by the common, give hope to the common.

A Sunday morning ritual is not complete until participants receive a personal prayer of blessing and touch on the head from the senior pastor. This pastoral blessing at the conclusion of the ritual mirrors the practice of Hindu temples where worshipers receive a touch and red paste or *tikka* on their head to demonstrate that they have met with their god and received a blessing. As such, the Pentecostal missionary practice of the laying on of hands in prayer may have been understood or infused by Indian converts with a similar meaning to what they experienced in their former religion. This tradition is part of all of the meetings I attended. The number of those who come for blessings varies from congregation to congregation. In those churches with congregants that are more recent converts from Hinduism and who appear to be less well off financially, nearly everybody queues up to receive the touch, prayer, and blessing from the pastor and/or special guest preacher. In

other churches, only a small percentage will approach the pastor, perhaps those with pressing or outstanding needs or those who continue to want to be blessed before they leave.

This is part of why the pastor's relational embrace of Dalits is so impactful. Pastors symbolically reproduce the hegemony of purity holding the highest social position yet also embrace the previously impure and untouchable congregants. They offer the kind of access that only high caste Hindus would receive elsewhere.

Spiritual Teaching

Whereas pastors are uncomfortable accepting themselves as holding a higher status within AG sub-society, they self-identify with pride as effective teachers. I have heard, on multiple occasions, AG pastors openly brag about the cleverness of their sermons and special insights of their teaching. They also judge each other by the quality of their preaching. To be considered a powerful or anointed preacher is highly valued. I heard on several occasions during gossip sessions something like, 'but he is a good preacher' or we cannot deny he is a 'powerful' speaker. Pastors, although not able to directly give salvation to their followers, teach the necessary knowledge that enables followers to access the 'power of the Holy Spirit' for earthly wellbeing and Jesus' gift of eternal salvation. This is similar to a *Sat Guru*, the spiritual guide within *Vedic* tradition that guides devotees to *moksha* salvation or liberation.[40]

Mlecko's description of the role of the guru within Indian society mirrors that of a pastoral role in Delhi AG churches. For Indians, 'religion is manifested or embodied in the

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[40] The key difference is the cosmology. Whereas the *Sat Guru* attempts to expose a deep spiritual knowledge within the devotee, the AG pastor conveys knowledge of God who is distinct from the person.

continuing, successive presence of the guru. It is the guru who reveals the meaning of life, he is the immediate, incarnate exemplar in life, and as such, the guru is an inspirational source for the Hindu' (1982: 33-61). More than any other task, preaching, teaching, and counselling are the primary duties of AG pastors. Like *guru*'s, they have the intellect and experience necessary and are responsible for passing down truth toward spiritual development.

In studying a Lutheran men's group in the United States, Bielo (2008) argues that Christian communities search for meaning in a social process, rather than one that is centred around a 'product' (such as the bible, for instance). Harding (2000) studies a similar process and observes that Christians continually position themselves in relation to scripture through ongoing interpretations. These interpretations mostly attempt to understand practical applications of scripture (Harding 2000). The process of searching for textual meaning most directly engages modern Christian society's cultural and institutional life. More specifically, this search for meaning cannot be resolved through interpretive discourse and reveals a series of cultural concerns, including presuppositions about the bible's authority, textuality, and relevance, understanding of religious identity, and fundamental ideas about small group bible study as a social practice. The process of discussing and evaluating various possibilities of meaning is more valuable to Christians than identifying settled textual meaning. Whereas it may be common for participants to discuss meaning of scripture and application to one's life in a Lutheran men's bible study (Bielo 2008), in other contexts, such as in Indian Pentecostal circles, it is common for the pastor to interject meaning and for debate to be discouraged.

Practical Guidance

Driving with senior pastor Kapil through South Delhi, he receives a call from a woman in his congregation. The call is broadcast via Bluetooth so that I become privy to what turns out to be a very intimate conversation. I am somewhat surprised by the content of the conversation given that my general understanding of Indian society is that issues of a sexual nature are not freely discussed. As I was only able to pick up part of the conversation, I asked about what the woman wanted. Pastor, perhaps breaching a clergy-client privilege, said that he had given advice to the woman who was complaining about a lack of intimacy with her husband who wanted ever more, deviant sex acts from the perspective of the woman, without foreplay or intimacy afterword. He then explained that his congregation, especially the women, confide in him and seek his emotional support and wise guidance in almost every aspect of their lives.

Pastors are wise and caring counsellors, replacing perhaps the Hindu *pandit* by providing guidance and confidence in decision-making amongst the converts. AG pastors in Delhi are also thought to have extraordinary wisdom and act as a source of guidance to converts. This guidance moves beyond the knowledge of God and the spiritual, similar to the active participation of *pandits* in the everyday decisions of Indian families. This is reflected by the manner in which AG pastors in Delhi extend their authority and voice beyond a particular ecstatic moment of spirit possession in sacred space and ritual performance to every occasion, including giving business advice, naming new-borns, giving advice on sex and marriage, and other guidance that has few, if any, boundaries. Congregants rely upon their pastor for nearly all major decisions.

Embodiment of God

In a moment of surprising candour, a senior pastor who was visiting from outside of Delhi confided in me, with embarrassment,[41] that 'his people see him as their replacement idol'. In other conversations with converts about their pastors, I received responses including 'he is God to us' and 'we cannot see God, but we can see our pastor'. On one occasion, I was talking with Vinod and a 20-year-old female convert. I asked her, why do you elevate your pastor to such a high position given that you believe all roles in the church are equal? Bhavna turned to Vinod when pondering the question and asked, 'Yeah pastor, why do you talk against the Catholic priest for being in between God and the people, but you are the same way?' Then I asked pointedly if the pastor is like an idol. She said, 'People want to put somebody between them and God, someone to seek advice and hear from... God... yes… like an idol… pastor is like God to us'. She continued, referring to the practice of receiving blessings and prayers described above, 'we people come bowing our head after church for blessings'. Then Vinod defended himself, 'Even if I teach that I do not have power, the people still chase and follow me to get blessings similar to a Hindu blessing when worshipers go to the temple without the red stripe in between their hair… one guy even put his head inside the window of my vehicle as I was driving away'.

Pastors habitually display cultural values of embodied veneration as they receive special titles, accepted verbal praise, gifts, and cash. For Indian converts to Pentecostalism, the transition from a religion full of embodied gods to one with an unseen God is, perhaps, made more comfortable as pastors provide an embodied destination for faith acts, the proper recipients of tangible gifts of devotion.

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[41] Occupying God's space or 'receiving God's glory' is the highest form of sin within Pentecostal doctrine and AG tradition.

Mediation of Grace

Vikash Singh uses the term 'dread' to describe the oppressive fear that Hindu *pandit-babas* place upon participants. In his ethnography of a ritual pilgrimage in North India, Singh points out the fear and anxiety that pilgrims experience in relation to their *baba*'s demands (2017). Although pastors take on replacement roles of the religious practitioners of Indian society, according to converts, there is one clear difference. AG pastors are described as loving, kind, and gentle fathers who motivate through encouragement. They compare the mediation of AG pastors to the oppressive demands, to the point of dread, of Hindu counterpart practitioners as one reason among many that converts report leaving Hinduism. They report a deep frustration with being blamed for ineffectual rituals and the constant demand for more money. In the case of AG pastors, this is in comparison to the initial MPE exchange where there is an absence of demanding money, even a reluctance to teach about tithing, and never a charge for spiritual services. AG pastors also encourage converts with words of kindness and do not normally blame the failures of prayers on the faithful. The only exception is the demonizing of Hinduism itself whereby continuing to participate in Hindu rituals and practices is thought to produce harm and prevent healings and financial blessings.

As replacements for their Hindu counterparts, AG pastors in Delhi make hope compelling, providing embodied models of imagined aspirational alterity and effective mediators to access the Holy Spirit's power for converts. They are for converts the very embodiments of God and the rightful recipients of Indian devotion. As such, pastors enjoy the expected benefits of hegemony and power; however, the relationship is marked by sincerity of care, appreciation free from fear, and asking money for clerical service.

Finally, the pastor, acting as *Brahmin*, along with the established middle class and

sometimes higher caste lay people with good jobs, befriend new prospects, invite them to their homes, and share meals with regardless of caste. Within Indian society these acts signal egalitarian positioning. The everyday and ritualized ethics of welcome confer purity upon the previously labeled untouchables.

Vikash discussed the power of social inclusion for marginalized groups. He said, 'not only is good news preached to the poor' but it acted our as 'Christians accept anybody, the low caste, and the poor'. He contrasted this with 'other religions' which only 'give food the poor or alms'. Christianity is different, he concludes because they invite the 'poor to participate in the community' and invite 'the hungry for dinner rather than merely giving them bread in a food line'.

Promises

These relational elements in the early life of a conversion career are crucial. The focus of the training during these interactions is the AG gospel knowledge localized to emphasize the made pure embrace elements. This is seen in sermons along with less formal informational exchanges between prospects, AG lay leaders, and junior pastors that are focused around solving the prospect's problems. As we have seen, the transactional nature of MPE is a good deal and is an appealing aspect of the early stages of a conversion career complete with teachings about God's love and acceptance of everyone and the promise of purity and healing.

A second group of knowledge resonates around the promises and power of the Holy Spirit, including the 'Holy Spirit delivers you from all bondages and fear', the 'Holy Spirit is powerful to protect you from all evil powers', and the 'Holy Spirit give healing, and frees you

from all curses'. The proselytizing discourse offered in the MPE exchange is the promise that the AG religious solution will work. In addition to prospects being taught about the grace of God who accepts all people and makes them pure, they are also told about the promises of God. They say things like, 'Jesus will heal you and/or take away your problems', 'When the pastor prays you will definitely be healed', 'The Holy Spirit will deliver you', or 'Your problems are nothing to God'. Finally, prospects are taught that they do not need to fear that failing to appease previous Hindu gods may result in pragmatic difficulties because the Christian God is most powerful and/or the only one true God.

Miracles and Answered Prayers

The seekers who have lost hope in Hinduism and who are drawn in through personal relationship and a promise of the Holy Spirit's power also report an answer to prayer that is attributed to supernatural forces. In this regard, interest in Pentecostalism is utilitarian where performative faith or meaning (Mosse 2012) drives converts to seek the Holy Spirit's direct intervention in their daily life situations, especially related to solving their difficulties. These miracles do not always happen right away, but generally the next element described in oral histories is some sort of supernatural intervention. According to Bauman, Pentecostal pastors in India identify 'evangelism focused on healings and encounters with demonic forces, as the primary reason for Christian growth in the areas where they worked' and 'that the primary reason non-Christian Indians first begin to affiliate with Christianity today is because they believe they have received physical healing, liberation from evil spirits, or solutions to family problems after the intercession of Christians' (2015: 98).
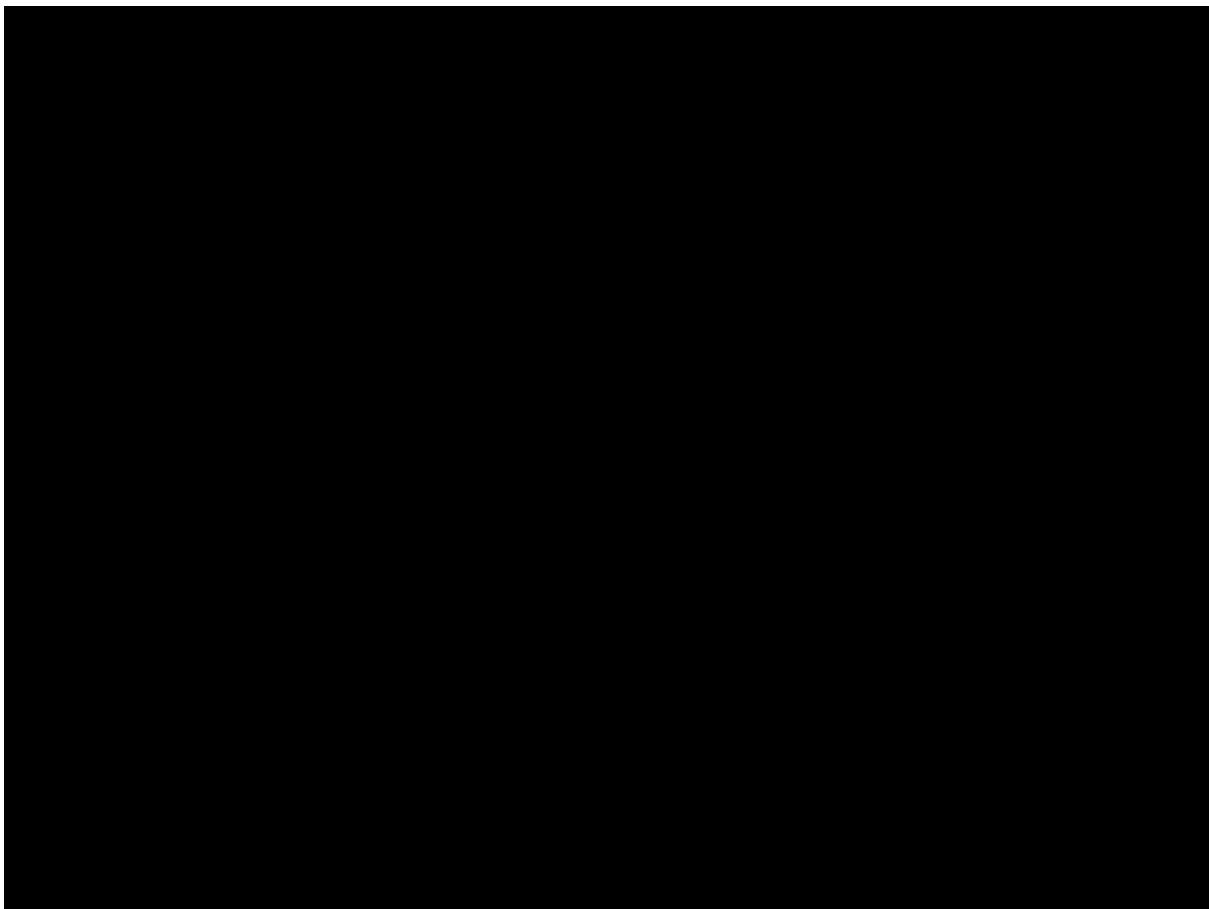
AG 'Special Delhi-Wide Healing Meeting' (Jensen 2014)

Pastor Vinod concluded our discussion of why people come to church with this explanation: 'Pentecostalism offers spiritual provisions to counteract various oppressions including lack of peace, physical ailments, fear of witchcraft, demon possession, joblessness, financial need, depression, suicidal thoughts, and hopelessness. Most came because when they faced a problem they sought out options and neighbours, friends told them that Jesus is an option. They are not open to the message until hardship. Even if they had heard about Jesus prior they only paid attention during difficult time'.

The most common miracle stories that I heard were of physical healing. Like Usha,'[42] who I met after a prayer meeting along with her sister, their logic in trying out Christian prayers was, although 'I was completely against Christians' we thought 'we have tried everything, let's just try this too.' In her case, the miracle was for her sister who after several months of suffering was 'unconscious and breathless' but became 'perfect to our amazement'; when the pastor prayed 'she was delivered.'

Varindra,[43] the former street fighter, told me of multiple examples of supernatural intervention into his physical hardships, including taking away uncontrollable anger and his fighting. In his words, he 'was getting transformed.' His testimony also included healing when 'a big stone fell' on his head and paralyzed him, as well as his sister being delivered from demon possession and his niece being healed of 'strokes and seizures.' His niece was healed after he prayed for her, and this is how he 'came to know that Jesus is hearing me and answering me, my faith has been getting stronger.'

A much older Pradeep tells his miracle story that saved his business. He identified as part of the *Prajapati Jaat* who are mostly found in North India and are classified as an Other Backward Class (OBC) group eligible for affirmative action benefits because of their educational and social disadvantage. But Pradeep was a 42-year old businessman with the confidence and personality of an outgoing entrepreneur who had two businesses: an 'online business' which he did not explain and dairy farming. Dairy farming in his case meant a owning a small operation of a few water buffalos that provided enough milk and income for his family to get by in lower-middle class accommodations. He said that he had 'heard about Jesus many times' which he attributed to being born and raised in Delhi. It was his second wife, a faithful Christian, who 'used to pray and read the bible' who introduced him to

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[42] Female age 27 years, born in Ratlam, Madhya Pradesh, Harijan (Scheduled Caste).
[43] Male, born in 1983, heard about Jesus in 1998, baptized in 2004, age 29 years, born in Delhi, caste: Vaniyar Gowndar (Hindu).

Christianity. After what he describes as a sudden 'major loss' in his business where he had 'invested all' of his money and was left with 'too many debts', his family rejected his new wife and they were 'thrown out' of their house. He describes his financial insecurity of having 'no house, no food and no money'. His wife encouraged him to 'just for once can you please pray to Jesus.' He described himself as a 'true devotee of '*Bajrang Bali*' who also decided that he should at least 'try Jesus also' as he reasoned 'I have nothing with me, when there is nothing left that I can lose.' After praying with his wife his 'big miracle' came the next day where he received a phone call 'with an order of 75,000 rupees' or around 800 GBP. This was followed by more future miracles where he received large orders after desperate prayers. He concluded that after 38 years of wasting his live in Hinduism, his faith in Jesus for the past four years increased.

Prospective converts like these participate in church with the anticipation of a miracle and normally will only consider on-going participation and attendance to church after they experience one. However, there seems to be some correlation between the type of miracle and the level of participation. Senior pastor Vinod explained the difference in a focus group of other pastors who agreed with his assessment:

> 'If a physical healing prayer is thought to have been answered, the seeker will begin to believe and credits Jesus for the miracle. But if the need is financial they attend church for some time hoping that they will land a job or opportunity, if it is physical ailment or spiritual oppression they first receive the miracle and then attend the church.'

In the stories, the miracle element is placed both before and after church attendance but always prior to baptism. Moving to a new community, the convert's time and energy are

increasingly devoted to relationships with other AG participants. In the next section, we will explore pre-baptism participation as an important element.

Liminal Trial Period

Some have argued that a clear description of the conversion process requires us to describe leaving Hinduism and joining Christianity somewhat independently. Garma recommends considering 'disbelief' as well as belief (Robbins 2007: 21), and Oddie concludes in the Indian context that converts first opt out of Hinduism before adopting Christianity (Webster 2012: 156). However, for the converts that I spoke with, their move away from Hinduism involved at least several months and often several years of holding onto Hindu faith and practice after beginning to attend AG church meetings and participating in AG rituals. During this time of church participation prior to conversion, converts experience social inclusion, affectively charged rituals, and hopeful teaching that demonize their previous religion (Meyer 1999).

The converts I talked to maintained their Hindu identity, relationships, and practices from several months up to a few years. This crypto-religion is not dissimilar to what others including Kent observed among secret Christian women in South India who chose to observe Hindu rituals publicly yet hold a private inner Christianity (2011). Yet this holding of two competing faith identities is only a phase or period of time that, normally, eventually leads to a full public confession of faith and Pentecostal identity. My research assistant explained that new participants 'hold onto their old religion, may hide idols and other symbols of old faith from pastor, may be secret dual believers, spend time in both the Christian and Hindu communities, understand the pastor as a *pandit* for some time, and

need help easing their fears of spiritual powers fearing that leaving Hinduism will result in being cursed'.

So, during this period of participation prior to baptism, converts do break from their commitment to Hinduism, though it takes time for the formal and informal AG instruction to eventually compel converts. Conversion in this sense is never complete but an on-going decision to trust in AG clergy and the Holy Spirit in lieu of Hindu *pandits* and gods. Converts often define the in between timeframe as a struggle. Nathanial Roberts, writing about the rupture process among South Indian Pentecostal converts, captures this well, explaining that it is 'difficult to convey the kind of courage required of a potential convert who relinquishes all the rituals, objects, and gods they have hitherto invested so much in, in order to place themselves entirely at the mercy of an unknown Saviour' (Roberts 2012: 284).

A group of pastors told me that even after water baptism, some converts are afraid and question if they have made a bad choice. They concluded in hindsight that converts seem to be trying the solution out and, for some time, do not fully accept the truths being taught to them. It is not a Pauline rupture but a trying out process in which prospects participate before they commit; belong before they subject themselves to the demands of conversion. This belonging prior to conversion provides converts with what they need to complete an extremely risky journey from the security offered by their previous faith to that offered by AG Christianity. Prospective converts can try before they buy and until their other problems, including financial difficulties, have been solved before they commit.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have traced the experiences that I argue make up the first conversion exchange, the made pure embrace that offers Dalits social inclusion and promises Holy

Spirit provision in exchange for participation. Participation is valuable for Indian pastors in the process of growing their church, demonstrating to donors the value of their ministry. As we will see, participation is a necessary step that leads Hindus to full conversion.

First, lay people act as relational bridges and demonstrate the social embrace of MPE by welcoming new prospects into the AG community. Church members are taught to actively seek out and welcome newcomers. They enthusiastically welcome neighbours, friends, family members, office workers, and drivers as points of first contact. They invite them to home prayer meetings and Sunday church gatherings so they can meet the pastor. This social inclusion extends to Dalit communities that are often excluded in Hindu contexts and is similar to 'try before you buy' as the social embrace precedes, often by years, the actual exchange where converts fully turn from Hinduism.

Second, pastors play a central role at the top of the AG social order, enjoying both economic and hegemonic benefits. The senior pastor is both the mediator and embodiment of hope, the icon that is venerated by converts whose aspirational alterity depends upon the Holy Spirit's power in the hands of the same icon. They are embodiments of hope and make hope compelling by giving converts confidence that an alternate life trajectory is possible. They act as guides and teachers, instructing converts who face the oppressions of exploitive capitalism, displacement from their villages, family and social problems, and a lived Hinduism that is itself oppressive.

Chapter 5

The Drama of Hope: Holy Spirit as Compelling Affect

'Credible promises are very attractive to desperate people'.

-   AG senior pastor in Delhi

Introduction

I have outlined the first exchange of the conversion process in which converts attend and belong to the AG community prior to formally taking on Pentecostal Christianity as a replacement knowledge regime. In this liminal stage of conversion, converts participate in the AG community by trying out Pentecostalism in a pragmatic and rational search for a religion that works. Echoing the claims of AG Pentecostals themselves, I have argued that AG replacement faith is made compelling at first by others who have previously forged the conversion journey, and secondly, by healing experiences that compel Hindus to participate in Pentecostal rituals. In this chapter and the next, I will describe two sets of experiences that are especially effective at compelling these participants to complete the second conversion exchange.

Charismatic empowerment is understood by AG Pentecostals to be the key to a successful missionary effort (Petersen 1996; McClung 1999; Satyavrata 2011). AG thinkers believe that the supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit supplies the power for effectiveness in preaching, moral transformation of converts, freedom from the effects of false religion including exorcising evil spirits through casting out demons, compelling signs and wonders as well as compassionate answers to prayers for physical healing, relational or family troubles, financial needs, and even children's school performances. I will argue that the promises of hope outlined in Chapters Three and Four are made compelling by affect, that spiritual experiences of converts confirm the word of God being preached and that

these lived experiences are congruent with the theological expectations of Pentecostal doctrine.

First, I will describe the central AG ritual gathering that takes place on Sunday mornings and employ affect theory to analyze the familiar yet elusive power of the spirit as experienced in Pentecostal ritual gatherings. I refer to this gathering as a drama of hope because multiple actors experience and embody the Holy Spirit's power together, their individual expressions of emotion both fuel and are fuelled by the expressions of others, especially the worship leaders, toward a mutual affective experience. These gatherings are both symbolic of hope and emotionally stirring.

I will begin with a foundation of anthropological theory to frame the AG Pentecostal worship as a form of 'collective effervescence' (Durkheim 1995). I describe the Sunday ritual of AG Pentecostals in Delhi and attempt to define the power of the Spirit in anthropological terms. Further, I will explore elements that serve to amplify affect in AG rituals and attempt to extrapolate principles that may add to the affect theory discourse.

Effervescence, Affect, and Spirit

Durkheim's 'conscience collective' is a good place to start (1995: 238). The 'social sum of individual forces' was for Durkheim the collective conscious or collective effervescence in which the 'real religious forces of social life' spring into a transformational experience. Fields defines effervescence as 'assembling and temporarily living a collective life that transports individuals beyond themselves… swept away, the participants experience a force external to them, which seems to be moving them, and by which their very nature is transformed' (1995: xli).

What is left somewhat undefined or theorized in Durkheim's sacralization of the social is the nature of the 'force' itself. What is it in the individual participant that is being affected by the collective? What does the individual offer the collective that results in effervescence? At the very minimum, humans seem to have a perceptual capacity (and perhaps a communicative capacity) that extends beyond cognitive verbal and non-verbal communication.

Yet perceptual affective capacity is difficult to capture in that describing that which itself occurs outside of signification is perhaps impossible. Hemmings points out, 'there is no denying, or deferring, affects. They are what make up life, and art… affects are… the stuff that goes on beneath, beyond, even parallel to signification. But what can one say about affects? Indeed, what needs to be said about them?' (2005: 548). O'Sullivan concludes, 'You cannot read affects, you can only experience them' (2001: 126).

Spinoza (1985) argued affect to be inadvertent, spontaneous and natural, specifically not of spiritual or religious origin. These happenings include the emotions of fear, love, desire, hate, and hope. For Deleuze, affect is non-discursive pre-social forces that are spontaneous and inadvertent. They are unpredictable in that they do not conform to social meaning. These forces are distinct from emotion and located in the body, 'bodily meaning that pierces social interpretation, confounding its logic, and scrambling its expectations' (Deleuze 1997: 181). Characterized as occurring with an increase or decrease in power or intensity, they are the 'unpredictable autonomy of the body's encounter with the event, its shattering ability to go its own way' (Hemmings 2005: 551-553).

Massumi follows this line by emphasizing the autonomy of affect as a 'set of forces that condition and flow through the body, only to materialize as emotion' (2002: 61). These are characterized by 'intensity', they are 'nonsemantic, nonlinear, autonomous, vital,

singular, indeterminate, and disruptive of fixed (conventional) meanings. Hence, the affects provide a rich reservoir of unpredictable potentiality' (Martin 2013: S155).

Silvan Tomkins (2008), writing from a psychological perspective, describes affect as 'located subcortically in the brain' (Martin 2013: S155) and as low-level automated responses that evolved for survival purposes. These '"basic emotions" or "affect programs" are genetically hardwired responses' (Leys 2011: 438-439) and have 'a singularity that creates its own circuitry' (Hemmings 2005: 552). 'For Tomkins, then, affect connects us to others, and provides the individual with a way of narrating their own inner life (likes, dislikes, desires and revulsions) to themselves and others' (Hemmings 2005: 552). Affect is therefore independent from language, non-signifying, visceral, and non-cognitive processes that influence our thinking and judgements (Leys 2011).

What is important to this study is how affect is used to make conversion more attractive to Dalits and other Hindus. I align my argument with Mazzarella who links affect to advertising and takes issue with Massumi's and others' claims of the relative autonomy of meaning and affect, '[resisting] the absolute separation between the "rules of formation" that govern meaning and affect; after all, they must both emerge out of the same historical contexts' (2003: 48). I follow her conclusion by casting AG ritual life for those in the liminal stage (participants but not yet converts) as a sort of advertisement where the narratives of AG teaching are fused to the collective affective experience. The bundle of gospel meanings or product is peddled in affective wrappings so that the exchange value is worthy of completing the final stage of conversion marked by the water baptism ritual of rupture. The goal of increasing affective power is exactly to drive up the value of AG offerings to make them worthy of the cost of completing the conversion process.

Sunday Morning Worship

The ritual practices of the AG in Delhi trace their roots to the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, California where meetings had few of the historic rituals generally associated with protestant Christianity, but, rather, 'Men and women would shout, weep, dance, fall into trances, speak and sing in tongues, and interpret their messages into English' (Robbins 2004b: 120). Traditional North Indian Hinduism, especially the *Bhakti* tradition, is rich with ecstatic rituals and such expressions would provide a background to converts of Pentecostal Christianity. These include *yoga*, *puja*, *satsang*, festival, and *bhakti* devotional forms (Desai 2010; Lorenzen 1995). The spiritual practices of the AG are somewhat similar. This is especially true when considering the way both traditions rely upon embodied ritual practices including the raising of hands and clapping. These gestures have been described as creating a participatory environment in which the worshipers themselves become the icons (Albrecht 1999: 193). This includes language and speech in sacred formulaic forms (Robbins 2004a: 165). Pentecostal ecstatic practices (glossolalia, prophecy, possession, exorcism) have perhaps drawn the most attention from anthropologists.

The following description of my attendance at Pastor Kapil's church is typical of all of the church meetings that I attended. I arrived early and found it difficult to find a parking place, not because of the many cars driven by other worshipers as very few own cars, but because the rented meeting hall was set in a densely populated residential neighbourhood of Kalkaji, two blocks from pastor Kapil's home and original church hall. The event hall, used for weddings and other parties, was on the main road that separates middle class flats from the large unauthorized community from which most congregants walked to church. This hall was a similar size to the main churches of pastors Vinod and Irwin and could seat around 200 in chairs and many more sitting on the floor. The AG meeting halls vary widely from small (50 sq. meters), crowded, and stuffy rented basements to large purpose-built

auditoriums complete with theatre seating and stages. All of the churches that I visited had seating, generally stackable plastic chairs, and air conditioning. Some congregations used a seating arrangement similar to other Indian religious gatherings in which women and men sit apart with a centre aisle separating them, while others utilized a more modern arrangement similar to western churches where genders are mixed and families commonly sit together. In Kapil's church people sat both on the floor and in chairs behind separated, but not strictly, by gender. The women sat on the right side facing the stage and the men on the left. In all of the churches the women slightly out numbered the men.

I was greeted enthusiastically at the door, and after I removed my shoes, I was quickly ushered to the front row of chairs by a man who said, 'Pastor please sit here in the front'. I told him I preferred to be in the back and took my seat behind the crowd to give me a better view of the congregation. I noticed that I was not the only person greeted enthusiastically, each person, regardless of age, gender, or if their clothing indicated relative wealth or poverty was heartily welcomed by greeters at the door and then by fellow worshipers.

I quickly took notice of the modern technology on display on stage. The church had upgraded its kit significantly from the small sound system that I had purchased for them 20 years prior. The quality of sound and video systems, musical instruments, laptop computers, air conditioning, and other technical tools are important to pastors. Even small churches with minimal budgets have large speakers, microphones, soundboards, as well as electronic keyboards, drum sets, and electric guitars. Most have video projector systems that are used to project song lyrics during corporate singing, videos, or other visuals during sermons and/or announcements. Some larger churches have stage lighting, disco lights, and smoke machines to enhance visual effect. The use of technology signals success and modernity. So, although some missionaries have advocated contextualizing the church by returning to

sitting on the floor and using traditional Indian instruments like the harmonium (Indian keyboard) and *dollak* (drums), these efforts have mostly been rejected by Indian clergy because, as Vinod states, 'nobody in India is interested in remaining backward, the contextualized church movement fails because people are trying to break away from old ways of doing things'. Kapil's church on this Sunday morning was adorned with these modern middle-class technical symbols.
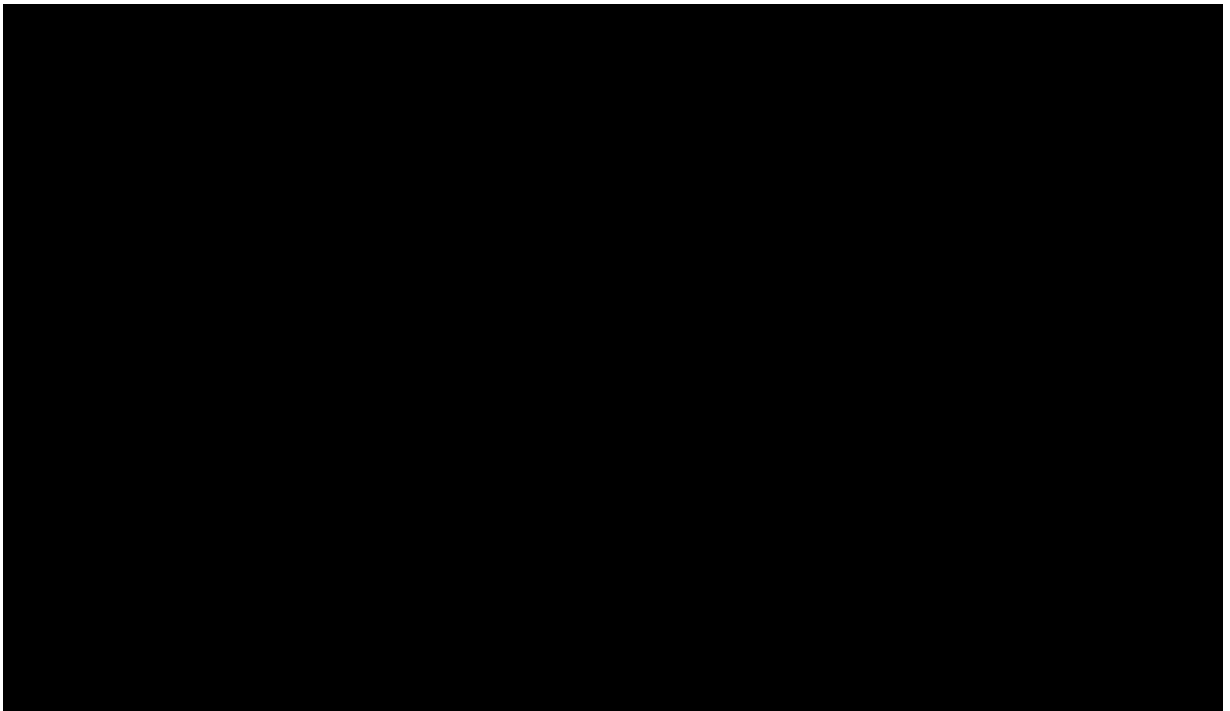
Sunday morning church service at an AG church in New Delhi (Clark Jensen 2014)

I took note that this was anything but a solemn, stuffy affair. Although there was a sense of formal and sacred respect for the clergy, the mood was positive and upbeat. Congregants greeted each other upon arrival, shook hands, and chatted. Small circles of men and women formed prior to and after the meeting, full of expressive conversation, and

laughter, and, according to Mercy, there was no shortage of gossip. The scene suggested a close-knit community. Congregants referred to each other as brother and sister and new attendees were quickly afforded the same insider language. Pastor Kapil greeted the crowd with a joke. He like other pastors used humour, spoke to the congregation in an informal way, asked questions, and created dialogue.

The relaxed family element continued with birthday, anniversary, and wedding announcements. Kapil moved through these in a personal way, providing detail, and demonstrating his personal relational connection to those who were recognized. These family matters were announced from the stage along with health and wellbeing updates. Periodically, awards were given to children and youth for various competitions including bible quiz and singing. There was a general encouragement and kindness, a family-like atmosphere.

Then the band took the stage, signalling the beginning of worship or corporate prayer and singing. Pastor Kapil and his wife and ministry partner, Joy, led. The mood changed, the emotional vibe ramped up with earnest, serious, desperate tones like children calling out to a parent. Worshippers approached God with their affections. The Pentecostal God is not just personal, but visible through the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Bodily movements like raising of hands and bending over while joining together in a chorus of prayer in tongues was led with equal passion. I listened as the musicians worked in harmony, complementing their music and pace as Kapil and Joy moved the crowd from one emotional high to the next, sometimes interspersed with solemn introspection. Kapil encouraged the crowd 'to lay down their burdens, rest in the presence of the almighty for he loves and cares for you'. He continued, 'He is the one true God of love, not like Hindu gods that must be appeased and feared and can only be approached according to one's caste'. Luhrmann describes the God concept of American Pentecostal spirituality similarly. She argues that there has been a shift

away from the angry harsh God of the Old Testament to a kind and active God who cares deeply about individuals in matters large and small. He 'loves unconditionally; he forgives freely; he brings joy' (2012: xvi). This God is also 'tangibly present after he has been invited to come' (2012: 6). This description applies to the Indian AG view of God as loving, forgiving, no respecter of persons (meaning that he welcomes and loves every gender, race, and socio-economic status), and interested in those who worship him. The god of the AG is very much distinguished from their past Hindu gods. As Mercy put it, 'God is personal in a loving, concerning and caring way, not like the harsh, vindictive Hindu gods'.

I continued taking notes at the meeting, at times drawn into the emotion. It was the sort of meeting I had attended hundreds of times throughout my years of living in India and followed a consistent pattern that I will now describe in more detail.

Elements of Sunday Morning Worship Ritual

As formulaic action directed toward a divinity, Pentecostal ritual has been described as spontaneous to the point that some Pentecostals object to using the term ritual to describe their meetings (Albrecht 1999). Authentic charisma-driven spiritual experience is valued, and routinized action is thought to quench the Spirit. Csordas (1997) says, Pentecostals see no distinction between the sacred and profane and, hence, consider all occasions as sacred and all social domains as places for potential spiritual occasion; this 'anti ritualism' is, according to Pfeil (2011: 164), itself ritualized (Anderson 2010: 162-164). Nevertheless, the order of service that represents AG liturgy was remarkably consistent among the three main church sites as well as branch churches that I visited with only slight variations. They included the following elements listed in order:

1. Intercessory prayer for the meeting by a junior pastor

2. Welcome of the Holy Spirit by the senior pastor

3. Corporate singing and prayer

4. Scripture reading

5. Welcome the crowd, special guests, and newcomers

6. Announcements of upcoming church activities and city programmes

7. Tithes and offerings with a special song

8. Testimonies and prayer requests

9. Senior pastor prayers for requests, anniversaries, and birthdays

10. Preaching

11. Response: alter call

12. Communion on the first week of every month

13. Benediction prayer

14. Missions offering as people leave

15. Individual blessings and prayers by the senior pastor

The following sections narrow in on the aspects of a typical Sunday morning ritual[44] that amplify affect.

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[44] Although AG Pentecostals in Delhi gather often, most identify with a particular church and attend to its respective Sunday morning service. The elements from the Sunday morning ritual are also present in some form in the multiple gatherings of AG congregants. Csordas describes Pentecostal ritual life as 'subsum[ing] quotidian practices' (2011: 129) where there is a 'ritualization of life, interpersonal space, the domestic space, civic space, geographic and natural space, and time' (Csordas 1997: 102). These include informal house meetings such as birthday and anniversary celebrations, small gatherings of women, youth, men, fasting prayer, and bible studies. In addition, they are present in large *special meetings* in which halls or auditoriums are rented for healing and evangelistic *crusades*, leadership training, or discipleship training. The following is a description of the consistent elements of the Sunday morning ritual from the primary church sites of my study.

The Crowd Itself

Prefacing Durkheim's theory of 'force' wherein an assembly produces transforming 'effervescence' which is then sacralized and given religious meaning, Fields writes, 'it is through real experience that participants come to ascribe power to sacred objects' and 'arrive at the concept of force, but the real experience they have is that of human beings assembled'; 'society's concentrating or pulling itself together and thus becoming a unity in the real' (Fields' in Durhkeim 1995: xlii). The first element that increases its intensity, according to the leaders that I talked to, is an emotionally active crowd. Converts participating through bodily expressions amplify the spiritual experience for others. The participation of the crowd is necessary, however, Pastor Vinod admitted that the crowd is not always effective at bringing affect. He says that the 'expectation of people, when they come, is key'. If 'they know that the preacher is powerful, anointed', it will help and this 'expectation prepares their mind' for action. He also described the Spirit in the people as being 'contagious'. He continued, 'the spirit means that you don't feel tired, are connected with one another and the Spirit'. He then clarified that even in smaller meetings this is true; 'Friday prayer… no music but time goes very fast, intimacy and closeness of the smaller crowd… united in the spirit… we live out the exhortation from the bible. The bible says *come* closer to me and I will come closer to you… humble yourself… surrender yourself'.

Another compelling moment in the drama comes as the junior pastor shares testimonies of how God has healed or provided for various members during the past week. Every week, there are at least a few stories of answered prayer. Occasionally, the pastor will ask a member to tell his or her own testimony. I heard testimonies of converts being healed of various ailments from relatively unserious back pain to astounding reports of those healed by cancer. These testimonies provide proof that the Holy Spirit works to improve the lives of faithful followers. One junior pastor Manoj reported that 'when people hear the testimonies

their faith increases, and increased faith means increased chance that they too will be healed'. So, just as there is a contagion in giving, there is a contagion of expectation provided by these verbal confirmations that even the most serious of life's difficulties can be remedied by prayer. Along with these testimonies of successful prayer, the junior pastor also announces a new set of prayer requests from various members of the congregation. The requests range from employment to healing to comfort. The names of those who have requested are included. This opportunity to share personal needs that are then announced to the congregation as a whole, who in turn pray on your behalf, is very attractive to new participants. Mercy understands this to be a key difference between Hinduism and Pentecostalism: 'In Hinduism you only pray for yourself and your family, where here we pray for others and others pray for you'.

Roberts describes a 'logic of slum religion' in which Pentecostalism adapts into local logics, in this case, a logic in which gods meet the needs of followers, rather than Pentecostalism that presents a new or alternative moral framework to which followers must adhere (2016). This happens through, for instance, publicly sharing prayer requests and testimonies, and prayer and support through new networks participants.

Testimonies are the empirical evidence of the Holy Spirit's power working in individual lives. For example, Sister Daisy stood by the pastor, took the microphone, and proclaimed, 'my younger sister was diagnosed [with] cancer in [her] lungs six months back, and she was told to undergo a surgery and take 40-week radiation and seven chemotherapy sittings…. by God's grace she has now been completely cured... doctors said it's a miracle. All glory to God'. Pastor Vinod confirmed the importance of testimonies: 'people testify of healing and so people want me to pray for them'. He told a specific story of praying for a woman at the hospital who was in a coma, had respiratory problems, and was beyond surgery. When he visited, she could not 'understand a thing… I go, in her last state and

there is a miracle and she is discharged. The doctor attends my church, and so he shares the testimony of God's healing. This increased the expectation and resulted in a bigger crowd wanting prayer and more sense of God's Spirit in the meeting'. When 'people testify it brings more faith. The crowd believes… this guy is powerful… this guy has healing in his hands'. He continues to talk of his own experience in which 'two or three cancer patients were healed… through simple prayer… not through the drama at front… and for 10 or 15 years without treatment they are still alive… so people believe, expect that God's power will be there, and they emotionally respond'. He also told of a junior pastor of whom it was said, 'one week someone testifies that Pastor Giresh healed, so after he had more crowd'. Testimonies drive expectation and expectation results in the crowd's participation. Thus, the crowd's actions indicate that the Spirit is present as 'people get excited'.

Beyond testimonies, converts have other modes of compelling each other through the Spirit. Emotion is one of these modes. It is contagious and creates infectious momentum. Vinod said that through 'facial expressions… or when you see people cry… you have the same thing happen in you…. seeing the presence in others…. in their postures… it touches your heart… leaders also bring emotion… cry and it starts the process'. The emotion-filled AG ritual drama of calling out, singing, dancing, bodily postures, and movements signal to others that the Holy Spirit is at work.

According to Vinod, congregations are trained to participate since 'as Pentecostals… we operate this way and over time converts are exposed to this kind of worship and believe in it… this includes the way we worship or our exercise… singing out loud, lift hands, shout hallelujah, dance like David danced, having the Spirit of the Lord'. Converts are therefore informally trained in bodily and verbal emotive expressions which in turn amplify affect. Perhaps feeling the Spirit is also learned? In what she calls a theory of attentional learning, Luhrmann says that 'the way you learn to pay attention determines your experience of God'.

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She says, 'people learn specific ways of attending to their minds and their emotions to find evidence of God' and 'they begin to experience a real external, interacting living presence' (2012: xxi). Brahinsky's study of AG bible college students in California also argues that Pentecostal ritual sensations result from a training or cultivation where 'most participate in a sensory vernacular, a form of everyday sensory intelligibility and communication that foregrounds physical sensation as confirmation, what I call a "body logic." This physical authority emerges from a carefully cultivated sensory culture where sensate devotion marks spiritual growth' (Brahinsky 2013: 403). He reviews various training texts, mostly for youth pastors, where pedagogies or methods are recommended for these practitioners to cultivate spiritual possessions and manifestations including speaking in tongues.
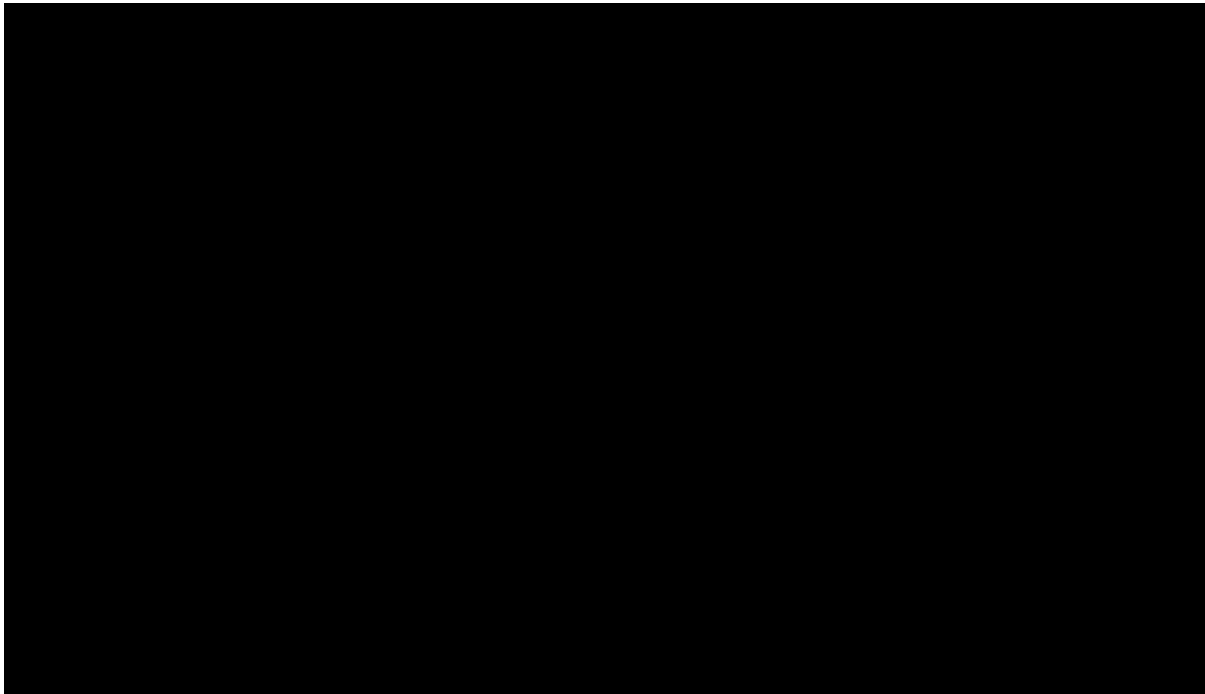
Worship at an AG church outreach in New Delhi (Jensen 2015)

According to Pastor Vinod, AG congregants first learn and train their actions to display bodily and emotional expressions. Especially in assembly, these provide evidence of God's presence for their fellow worshippers. Collectively, an actively emotional outward bodily response from multiple actors results in a compelling God experience. This is not unlike Hindu experiences where worshippers display bodily responses, such as *dhunana*. Luhrmann suggests the following.

> 'They learn to reinterpret the familiar experiences of their own minds and bodies as not being their own at all — but God's. They learn to identify some thoughts as God's or the response to his nearness. They construct God's interactions out of these personal mental events, mapping the abstract concept "God" out of their mental awareness into a being that images and remains in ways shaped by the bible and encouraged by their church community. They learn to shift the way they scan their world, always searching for a mark of God's presence, chastening the unruly mind if it stubbornly insists that there is nothing there. Then they turn around and allow this sense of God — an external being they find internally in their minds — to discipline their thoughts and emotions. They allow the God they learn to experience in their minds to persuade them that an external God looks after them and loves them unconditionally' (Luhrmann 2012: xxi).

Whether they are only reinterpreting and experiencing part of their own mind as the presence of God, interpreting the actions of others to be God's presence, or both, AG Pentecostals certainly experience God more intensely in assembly.

AG participants also experience the Spirit in personal private moments that lack the crowd, music, or charismatic preaching ministry. Pastor Vinod said some of the smaller prayer meetings like the weekly fasting-prayer have an even higher level of the Spirit, 'in smaller crowds even with no music but only prayer you can feel the presence of God if there is a unity in your prayer'. At times only five to 10 people gather but we 'feel something different… cry' and the testimonies bring a special level of 'intimacy'. He said when new people attend the fasting prayer meetings they are 'amazed' by the 'presence of God'.

In regard to Durkheim's conclusions, Fields argues that 'since a symbolic representation of the totemic being stands at the centre of things, the real power generated in the assembly comes to be thought of as residing in the totemic object itself' and 'symbols of totemic object extend the effects of the effervescence into life after the assembly is dispersed' (Fields 1995: xli). In the same way, perhaps, Pentecostals attribute their collective aesthetic effervesce to the work of the Holy Spirit. And, just as AG clergy are icons of hope, other participants in the AG ritual drama also produce hope by expressing themselves affectively. They become symbols of hope and proof that the Holy Spirit is indeed active and that supernatural assistance is available.

Intercessory Prayer

As congregants filed into the hall, shook hands, and found their seats, the first thing heard from the stage was a junior pastor praying for the service. Intercessory prayer, praying to God on behalf of others, in this case on behalf of the congregants and the meeting to come, is a central part of AG practice that is practiced at home, in ritual gatherings, and in special prayer meetings. The junior pastor drew attention to the stage through fervent tones asking things like: God the Holy Spirit would be present, that the people would be 'touched', and that the word would be received. This is the first step on Sunday morning to entering the presence of God where congregants are able to access a spiritual realm. The junior pastor continued to pray until the senior pastor took the microphone to formally invite the Holy Spirit to the gathering.

Inviting the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the meeting communicates the importance placed upon experiential spirituality. Access to the power of God is provided through the Holy Spirit. When the pastor invites the Spirit, he is not somehow choosing one part of the

Godhead above the others, but rather recognizing that the door to the realm of God is the Spirit. As he prays, 'Holy Spirit you are welcome in this place' or 'we welcome you… Holy Spirit', the meeting is formally underway. The efficacy of Pentecostal Spirit possession has been varyingly described and analyzed. Robbins, in his study of the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea, describes a ritual called the Spirit 'disko' where Spirit possession is so central 'that if it is not achieved in a reasonable time, those gathered halt the ritual and declare its performance a failure' (2004a: 282).

Prayer is the pragmatic opportunity for the Holy Spirit to intervene in the lives of converts. The pastoral prayer is the first of three opportunities in the program for converts to receive directly from the Holy Spirit. Healing rituals are a significant part of Pentecostal ritual practice. These rituals have been analyzed as a reflection of the accommodation of traditional healing methods toward a religious healing pluralism (Joshi 2012: 245). They have also been described as learned where the 'production of habitus' is achieved through 'ritual training' (Csordas 1997; Lehmann 2001). We have seen that the senior pastor's prayers are thought more likely to be answered given his special position and holy lifestyle. As he prays, the entire congregation prays as well. The result is a fervent chorus of voices asking god to heal, protect, provide for, comfort, etc. those in need. For converts, seeing their fellow brothers and sisters calling out in prayer is inspiring. According to Mercy, prayer 'was the most important part of the meeting' and one should not miss church because 'first we are missing God's word and second we are missing the possibility of being blessed by prayer'.

This can be contrasted with Birgit Meyer in her study of the Ewe where she attributes almost no value to Holy Spirit possession, stating it is 'dull and meaningless' and 'lacks the appeal of the possibility of articulating forbidden ideas, wishes and desires or to express facets of oneself evoking one's actual life conditions'. She argues that Holy Spirit

possession is only meaningful in its negation 'by creating room for the expression of the satanic in the context of deliverance, Pentecostals are allowed to enact otherwise forbidden or muted aspects of themselves' (Meyer 1999: 211). Inviting the Holy Spirit signals to the crowd to expect a participatory embodied and emotion-filled Pentecostal experience that is neither the all-or-nothing possession described by Robbins nor the dull and meaningless described by Meyer. I will argue this is foundational to meaning making and connecting spiritual experience to the promises of the AG for seeking people.

The Music: Aesthetic Effervescence

Another element correlated with the amplification of affect in AG rituals is music. Participating in AG worship services, one is immediately bombarded with emotionally stirring rhythms and a participatory crowd that sings, sways, and raises their hands. The more effective and experienced worship leaders call out to God and exhort the congregation with great emotion like desperate beggars or passionate lovers. Their ability to stir the crowd using the crucial peaks and lows of the musical accompaniment is compelling even to the coldest of observers.

As AG Pentecostals often use the term worship synonymously with corporate singing, the importance of this part of the meeting cannot be overstated. The mood is serious to the point of leaders expressing themselves in desperate pleading tones. A spiritual leader, normally the junior pastor, senior pastor, or pastor's wife, leads the singing accompanied by a band and back-up singers. The songs are mostly original Indian Christian tunes, but, occasionally, they are translated English songs sung in Hindi to the English tune. The music is rhythmic and produces an emotional response from the crowd. Fast beats incite joy and excitement while the slow songs bring solemn repentance. The singing makes

up a large part of the meeting time, typically 30 per cent of a two-hour average meeting time.

I was fortunate to be present when Senior Pastor Kapil devoted his entire Sunday morning preaching/teaching to explain Pentecostal worship practices. He introduced the subject by distinguishing Pentecostal meetings from other Christian churches: 'Our church is considered different because of being noisy, we clap more, dance more' but as 'Jesus is your groom and each of you are his bride, so express your love… this type of worship is biblical'. He went on to teach that there are six ways of expressing love through worship. Clapping, he said, 'is a sign of victory and conquering'. He referenced Job 27:23 and Nahum 3:19 (NIV 1984) and said, 'Devil defeated and Jesus is victorious'… 'Winning over battles in your life… Clapping is a sign of joyous celebration'. His logic was, 'My God is fighting for me even amidst all my problems and I am sure Jesus will give me victory'. Clapping is done in AG churches both during the singing time, but also during prayer. Some of the women will clap hard and fast to the point of going into a sort of a frenzy where they will fall over on the floor and shake. I have seen many of the women in pastor Kapil's church do this. With regard to shouting, 'We have traditional feeling that it is not good to shout at Church' (Psalm 27:1), but 'worship is an act of faith' (Galatians 4:27) (NIV 1984), 'Shout and pray, after there is deliverance in you then only there be deliverance from your situation… High Jericho wall fell when Israelites shouted and glorified God, if you have wall around you shout and glorify God… Be true to yourself, not a hypocrite. Express your true feelings… No matter what situation, worship God'.

He addressed singing referencing Psalm 95:1 and 96:1, 'Sing new song', and Numbers 21:16,17 (NIV 1984), 'Singing brought water out of dry well, if you have barren situation in life, sing out and there will be water… Don't cry in your hopelessness, sing… You are in a battle, battle belongs to God, you're God's child, sing in all your situations'. For

bowing and kneeling, he said, 'bowing means complete submission and kneeling means honouring God'. Referencing Matthew 1:9 (NIV 1984), he gave an example, 'In Kerala the finance minister bowed and knelt before a bishop, when there is such high honour for a man, how much more should it be for God'. According to Pastor Kapil, lifting hands is a 'sign of surrendering and blessings' and we should 'raise hands in holy place and praise the Lord'. He then provided an illustration that demonstrates that these bodily expressions are exactly about emotion: 'when India wins against Pakistan, there is so much of shouting and you clap and raise hands. Worshiping God is much more than a cricket match, when you lift your hands, Jesus rejoices'. He then described dancing and said that this is a 'controversial point' perhaps because dancing is also associated with nightclubs or western forms that are considered worldly by Pentecostals. He clarified, 'Many ask why is sister dancing like this?... While in Church feel free to dance before God', he referenced Psalm 149:3-4 and Psalm 150:4 to show that shaking a tambourine is biblical. Then he said, 'Even if you are in some problem, praise and worship God, victory is coming'.

These aesthetic elements are crucial to creating an atmosphere for the Holy Spirit. Pastor Vinod's view was that 'music is part of our culture to instigate our emotions'. He said that the rhythm of the music dictates the emotions of the crowd so that fast songs get people 'more excited', while during slow songs, 'there is not much move of the Holy Spirit but when we sing a song in fast tempo people receive it… something of our culture… fast songs bring joyful mood… drowns out depressing thoughts and sober moods'.

Bialecki describes worship and how part of the role of worship is to 'set the emotional tone for the service' (2008: 381). This then leads to placing importance on the order of songs, which songs are sung, and the beats per minute of chosen songs to 'create an affective sweep as the fast songs are followed by slower, more introspective tunes' (Bialecki 2008: 381). Some anthropologists have described the effects of worship as altered

consciousness (Miller 1997; Paloma 2003) and as participants entering into a trance (Luhrmann 2004).

Deleuze suggests that 'the mind begins by coldly and curiously regarding what the body does, it is first of all a witness; then it is affected, it becomes an impassioned witness, that is, it experiences for itself affects that are not simply effects of the body, but veritable critical entities that hover over the body and judge it' (Deleuze 1997: 124; Hemmings 2005: 563). In AG churches in Delhi, bodily practices and musical elements combine in worshipers in such a way that the mind engages with emotion and emotion drives them to accept and obey the truths and meanings being offered. The bodies in collective expression and music along with the active bodily participation combine to amplify affect, which is both perceived by the mind and produces emotion.

The Anointed Preacher: Charismatic Authority

The third element that amplifies affect and increases the power of the Holy Spirit in AG rituals is the anointed preacher,[45] or one who has been gifted by the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals make a direct connection between the anointing and the gifts or charismas of the Holy Spirit. Each church participant, and most prominently those in full time ministry, seek the empowerment and gifting of the Holy Spirit to fulfil their authoritative roles. The modern usage of charisma, following Weber, is the gift of leadership or power of authority. For Weber, 'natural leaders' who are able to lead in times of distress are not necessarily those with authoritative office or 'expert knowledge' but holders of 'specific gifts' (1968: 18-

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[45] Theologically, anointing is grounded in the Old Testament as the Jewish ritual act of pouring oil over the head, symbolizing the authorizing or setting apart a person for a particular work (Isaiah 61:1, 1 Samuel 15:1 and 26:9, 2 Samuel 22:51, Exodus 29:7). In the New Testament theology, Jesus as the Messiah is the anointed one and the disciples of Christ are also understood to be set apart for service (2 Corinthians 1:21) (NIV 1984).

19). The etymology of the term is rooted in the Greek terms *kharisma* meaning favour or divine gift, and *kharis* meaning grace, beauty, or kindness. This is found in Paul's teaching on the charismas or gifts of the Spirit and used by Pentecostals with reference to Holy Spirit empowerment. AG Pentecostals use the term anointed to relate to a preacher who is particularly effective, one who is charismatic, authoritative, and/or who can perform signs and wonders. According to pastor Vinod, not all AG preachers have the anointing, as one cannot learn the anointing, but it is 'a gift that either you have or don't have'. He also said that some preachers are recognized as 'more anointed'. So, for AG Pentecostals in Delhi, the Weberian and Pauline meanings come together as essentially the ability to move people to action.

Pastor Vinod described an anointed preacher as typically being a 'good singer, lively, expressive, funny, and charismatic', one who 'people can understand… who illustrates beautifully, who people need… one who touches on their needs'. He paused and then said, 'perhaps the greatest sign of the anointing is confidence… they will say God is going to heal you right now and offer hope and expectation that something will happen, they tell stories about other miracles to gain credibility to what he is promising'. This is consistent with Csordas' grounding of the 'locus of charisma in rhetoric', specifically in the 'skills of rhetorical performance' during rituals that are used to create predispositions to, experiences of, and perception of healing (Csordas 1997).

This same authoritative confidence enables these preachers to bring 'repentance through the power of the word'. I ask Vinod how the Holy Spirit helps make messages compelling. He explained that the 'Holy spirit precedes the word, prepares the people… preacher needs that', or creating the predisposition to spiritual experience. He described the crowd's anticipation and bodily participation during the sermon. He also maintained that the Holy Spirit is 'in the word itself… the word creates faith in people'. Here is perhaps where

the rhetorical abilities of the pastor create and perpetuate the affective response of the crowd, or facilitate individuals in moving towards spiritual experience. This is consistent with what Hirschkind concludes with respect to Islamic taped messages where he draws a connection between the content of the message and 'affective energies of ethics potential' when 'sermon oratory recruits the body of the listener in multiple ways' (2006: 98-99). Finally, Pastor Vinod said that the Holy Spirit also makes the message compelling with 'signs following… altar call prayer for healing', or helping individuals in perceiving spiritual experience. He concluded by saying, 'no Spirit results in the word failing… the message is not compelling… not obeyed' and that 'only teaching or exhortation in large crowd without the anointing of the Holy Spirit... doesn't work.'

I have already made the argument that Indian AG clergy are replacement priests and idols, as well as the embodiment of God for converts. If clergy are also anointed and possess rhetorical skill, they are not just objects to be venerated but also authoritative voices for God as converts sacralize the Holy Spirit within them in collective participation. This is an ad hoc ordination of the clergy where AG participants 'collectively make and remake this quality of sacredness but then encounter it after the fact as if it had always been' and as such sanctify, separate, and elevate clergy as holy and worthy of 'elaborated deference' (Fields 1995: xlvi). This all occurs because of the Holy Spirit is displayed in the work of clergy and measured by the relative power in one's preaching (the ability to stir emotions and motivate the will of the listeners), one's prophetic ministry (the ability to know personal information and see the future), healing ministry, and ability to perform exorcisms. The Holy Spirit demonstrated in clerical affective skill is made sacred by humans acting collectively in ritual performance. This not only separates clergy from laity in pronounced deference and elevation but also between AG clergy themselves. Although all clergy and non-clergy are thought to have access to the power of the Holy Spirit to perform these

miracles, there are certain clergy who are recognized for their outstanding charisma. This is not conferred upon their position in general but, rather, decided upon the basis of their performance. It is measured in the relative affect experienced when listening to their sermons, receiving their touch at an altar, or the ways in which converts' life situations improve.

Preaching God's word might be seen as the set of meanings that are expressed and supported or made compelling by the other elements of the drama; as such, the sermon might be the crescendo, along with social embrace and spiritual experiences, that render the promises true. The sermon is delivered with passion. Voice inflection and volume are used to drive home the various points. The congregation eagerly listens and often responds with verbal or bodily movements during the sermons. Together, the listeners and speakers work in concert toward intensity.

Pastor Vinod challenged the idea that the Holy Spirit is only realized in the power of collective ritual performance as he and other AG clergy believe that the charismas of the Spirit extend beyond the ritual space. He pointed out two gifts that he personally had all the time. The first pertained to his gift of counselling, especially in his work with abused children. He said, 'When in counselling they don't tell the truth… open up… no trust… connection… but when they talk to me immediately they open up… trust'. He continued, they 'bring revelations because of the Spirit in me… it's not that I use psychological book'. He explained that he received the questions to ask supernaturally, 'I myself am surprised by my own questions'. He told a particular story where he 'ask[s] about aborted baby' where the 'Holy Spirit gave question' and the girl immediately opened up. He said the 'Holy Spirit revelation… discernment and other supernatural abilities are in his personal life', not just in the AG church meetings. I pressed him to try to understand how he understood the process. He said, in 'counselling abused children… my spirit touches, communicates to their spirit…

and sub-conscious information is passed… they also immediately trust me and share their secrets and problems'. The Spirit system, then, is a communication system between individuals and between individuals and God. The Holy Spirit seems to be the force, word, or breath that connects the physical realm to the spiritual realm. In other words, if Jesus is God incarnate in the physical, and the Father is God eternal, the Holy Spirit is the conduit between the physical and the eternal, as well as the inter-subjective conduit that connects worshipper to worshipper, or clergy to convert. The Spirit might be understood as, simply, communication.

Second, Pastor Vinod pointed to his ability to compel people to join the church as proof that his anointing stays with him outside of the rituals. He said, 'one visit to non-believer and they will come to the church'. Fully anticipating my scepticism, he confidently proclaimed, 'I sincerely believe this is the work of the Holy Spirit'. He continued with an example where a language barrier removed the possibility that he was just a compelling apologist. 'I visit a Nepali family… they do not know Hindi… they also do not know English… I prayed for them in English and came back… next week they come to my junior pastor and tell, "we don't know what he said… what he prayed or preached… we only we know Jesus' name… and we want to know Jesus"'. Pastor Vinod concluded that it is 'God's grace' and had nothing to do with his ability to convince this family logically, rather, the family was compelled to convert on account of the Holy Spirit, God's grace, or charisma that was in him. He said, 'something other than language is there… 100% no doubt about it… we somehow connect on spiritual level… going to spiritual realm to get the solution'.

Altar and Response

After the sermon, it continues to be the norm among India AG pastors to ask congregants to respond in some way to the message. This signature element of AG Pentecostal Sunday ritual is known as the coming to the altar. This is accomplished by asking congregants to come forward in front of the crowd to kneel or stand, respond by lifting their hands, or to pray or call out to God from where they are seated. Pastor Kapil explained that the type of response is dictated by the content of the message: 'When the message is exhorting participants to repent from worldliness, sin, or Hinduism, we call the crowd to bodily responses of humility, perhaps bowing or kneeling down or lifting hands in surrender. When the message involves calling to mission I ask those willing to commit to come forward or stand. When the message involves words of encouragement I pray for the needs of the congregation, and lay hands upon the head of those in need'.

This response time at the end of the sermon is also accompanied by background music whereby the band or the keyboardist will return to the stage and play behind the pastor as he calls for response. The pastor leads the crowd into a corporate song as people begin to respond. Sitting in these meetings, even the sceptical outsider experiences the emotional appeal of the combination of music and the pastor's exhortation. The relative anointing of the preacher is also demonstrated during the altar-response by his/her relative ability to perform signs, wonders, have words of prophecy, or the ability to heal. At times, when a preacher prays for converts, they are slain in the spirit (fall backwards on the floor in a type of unconscious coma). The pastor's repertoire of supernatural abilities may also include words of knowledge and prophecy in which he/she diagnoses congregants' problems and/or predicts their future. This is akin to what an astrologist or palm reader might offer. These practices are especially used by special itinerate preachers known as evangelists. There is, however, self-conscious scepticism from many of the pastors that I

talked to with regard to these practices. Pastor Vinod openly questioned and disagreed with many of these and said, 'I know that these practices are not biblical but I continue to invite evangelists as the crowds enjoy the display of God's power'.

Finally, any description of AG Pentecostal altar experiences would not be complete without the mention of exorcising demons. Although, according to Pastor Kapil, the manifestation of demons also occurs during other parts of the meeting, the power encounter generally happens during the altar response when participants call out to God, sing and participate in the laying on of hands. Seekers being possessed by a demon are fairly common occurrences according to the senior pastors I spoke with. Each of them had multiple stories of encountering and casting out demons. Pentecostals normally exorcise demons through a power encounter where the person who is manifesting the demon is stood up, other church members gather around the person and pray aloud many times speaking in tongues, and the pastor places his hand on the head of the afflicted person and commands the demon to leave 'in Jesus' name' ('yesu ka nam me nikal jao').[46] Sometimes the demon will speak through the afflicted person, and the pastor will carry on a dialogue that often includes gathering information about the demon and the demon attempting to intimidate the pastor. If an exorcism is successful, outward bodily manifestations (writhing, shaking, screaming, etc.) will stop.

On occasion I went along with Junior Pastor Samson and two bible college students to visit a couple who had recently began attending church. They lived in a temporary community for construction labourers in a small room constructed of metal sheets. Manoj, who I had not seen before nor after at church, greeted us heartily, 'praise the lord', and welcomed us for tea. We sat on the double bed that mostly filled the room. His wife who was

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[46] This varies significantly from Hindu practice where the possessed are instructed to repeat mantras, read scriptures, burn incense, sprinkle water from holy rivers and a variety of other rituals that are also part of normal worship or *puja*.

never introduced by name bowed with closed hands and greeted us with '*Namaste*' and then went outside to prepare the tea. When she returned and after a few minutes of small talk as we sipped tea Samson opened the bible and began to read a passage in Hindi. I noticed the room was decorated with pictures of Hindu gods and goddesses. A small shrine with incense sat on a table in the corner. It was clear that although they had begun to attend church they also were practicing Hinduism. Less that a minute into the reading the women began to shake and grown. I had noticed over the years that demons seem to manifest during the reading of scripture, during worship or corporate singing, or when a person is prayed with the customary placing the hand on the head. It was something that I had seen many times over the years and I knew that an exorcism was in order. I had myself performed exorcisms on multiple occasions in different settings from village meetings to church services, and like this occasion in homes. On nearly all of the occasions, those troubled were women. It was not something that I was trained in, other than watching Indian pastors do it. Yet, there are a variety of approaches to the ritual, some simply pray, others command, ask the demon questions, sprinkle water, or hold and physically constrain the possessed person. My simple approach was to command the evil spirit to leave in Jesus' name. I can report that I was never very confident and that confidence seemed to be the key to success. When the demons speak using the body that they control, they nearly always say something intimidating. On one occasion, it said 'I am God', and on another occasion, 'you have no power over me'. I was also never worried, as some are, that the demon might move from the subject to myself. Yet, in all but one case, where the body went completely limp and unresponsive, I was successful in that the writhing or moaning would stop, the person would return to normalcy, and social trauma would cease.

Samson asked us to pray, placed his hand on the women's head, and talked calmly but with authority. The demon did not on this occasion speak but after a minute or two the

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women relaxed and then he calmly finished the passage. After his reading he counselled them, as apparently this was the third time he had caste out a demon. He explained that because she continued her *pujas* and continued to fear her gods that she was opening herself up to possession and that until she threw out her pictures and idols it would continue to happen. To Samson there was a connection between the god that one serves or is devoted to and the spirit that indwells. He explained to me as we drove that the same is true of the Holy Spirit. He distinguished the two types of spirits, saying that the Holy Spirit never comes uninvited, nor does one lose their awareness and control, and the results are always beneficial, whereas demons can devastate a person's life.

Communion

On the first Sunday of every month, AG churches add the Eucharist ritual to the response time of their Sunday morning service. I visited pastor Irwan's church on a Sunday morning. As we reached this solemn moment, the keyboardist played soft reflective music like a slow love ballad in the American rock tradition. Young men in their twenties who were bible college graduates and apprentice pastors acted as ushers to facilitate the ritual. They carried trays designed to hold many small plastic shot-glass-looking receptacles that were filled with the wine, the blood of Christ, in this case grape juice along with bread, the body of Christ, served as small dime-sized purposely produced round wafers. The congregants stood in their rows and passed the trays, helping to facilitate everyone being served. The pastor prayed an emotionally charged prayer about Jesus' sacrifice and love. He gave those standing, now holding a wafer in one hand and a shot glass in the other, the admonition to remember the sacrifice of Jesus as they eat the bread. Some with heads bowed, others looking heavenward in reverence, ate together. He prayed again, thanking Jesus for his

blood that washes away sin and brings healing, for 'by his stripes we are healed'. He instructed them to drink. They drank and placed the glasses in their chairs and then immediately raised their hands to the sky. The music continued and they prayed unscripted prayers of thanksgiving. After several minutes of prayer and singing, the pastor closed the ritual in a thanksgiving prayer and the young men collected the glasses to be washed and used again.

AG pastors distinguish their understanding from how the Catholics understand the Eucharist. Communion is about remembrance of what Christ has done for the believer. It has no mediation power of its own. It is also though of as an expression of commitment. Pastor encourages the congregation, 'Communion is not a ritual, but a commitment and dedication to Christ. It is not the table of an AG church or denomination and it does not carry miracles. No special blessings but a reminder to walk in the Lord'.

The Power of the Spirit as Affect

Haynes explains that recent ethnographies make room for explaining participants' understandings of the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, therefore incorporating divine intervention into an anthropological discussion. This is somewhat of a break from other anthropological study in which divine agency is not represented to the extent that informants understand it. She points out Roberts who incorporates an understanding of divine intervention without arguing for or against theism (2016). I use affect theory to analyze divine intervention and specifically how the embodied experiences of the participant in worship, that are understood to be encounters with God, are connected to the promises and commitments that they are considering.

In order to more fully describe Pentecostal Sunday rituals, we must go beyond visible elements to the force or emotional charge that undergirds them, the Holy Spirit. Like their American Pentecostal counterparts, AG converts in Delhi have 'sought out and cultivated concrete experiences of God's realness. They have strained to hear the voice of God speaking outside their heads. They have yearned to feel God clasp their hands and to sense the weight of his hands push against their shoulders. They have wanted the hot presence of the Holy Spirit to burst their cheeks and knock them sideways' (Luhrmann 2012: xv). They are seeking an active force - God, gods or spirits – that are alive in religious experience and practically helpful in the daily concerns of their existence.

What AG worshipers in Delhi experience is a non-discursive force, which resonates with how Gregg and Seigworth (2010) describe affect 'in the capacities to act and be acted upon' and they experience 'an impingement of extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained' set of 'forces or intensities'. Affect 'pass[es] body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in these resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, and in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves' (Gregg and Seigworth 2010: 1). AG Pentecostals describe the Spirit in terms of feeling or sensing a presence where a worshiper is 'touched'. Pastors often use terms that indicate a bodily sensual experience. Pastor Kapil's greeting to his Sunday morning crowd prior to his sermon was an often-heard refrain in AG churches: 'Can't you feel the presence of the lord?' Likewise, the testimonies of converts often include being touched. Sister Rupa's statement was typical: 'as pastor was praying I could feel the touch of the Holy Spirit and I knew that I was healed'. Even when AG participants use other sensual terms such as hearing, in clarification, most of them admit that they are not hearing an audible voice but experiencing more of a feeling. Asher stated, 'you just know because of how you feel'.

As such, these intensities are in them, upon them, and between them. This is consistent with how AG converts describe being touched or 'feeling the presence' as well as being 'filled with the Spirit' and experiencing emotionally charged bodily expressions that are understood as proof of the Spirit's 'infilling'. Various verbal and non-verbal bodily expressions are viewed as proof of the Spirit's presence in a worshiper, speaking in tongues, being slain (falling down as if in an unconscious state), clapping (sometimes so rapidly that converts fall into a sort of frenzy), shaking, lifting and waving hands, as well as crying. All of these are normally accompanied by facial expressions that indicate strong emotion. The Spirit is thought to permeate the body and indwell participants. The most obvious expression of the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues (glossolalia), which is exactly a pre- or non-cognitive verbal expression.[47] It was described to me by Pastor Vinod to be as 'shutting off the brain and allowing the Holy Spirit to take control of your tongue' because the 'Holy Spirit knows better how to pray'. Similarly, Junior Pastor Manoj, while instructing young people how to 'receive the Holy Spirit', told them to 'just let go', 'open yourself up', 'don't fight it', and 'let your tongue go'. Perhaps this indicates a personal battle in which one's cognitive system must be shut down to allow the Holy Spirit to be expressed through one's tongue? Glossolalia is practiced both during Sunday and other group rituals as well as in personal prayer as a prayer language.

The Spirit can even be transferred between participants through the laying on hands. Laying on of hands is mostly done by the clergy who are thought to possess higher levels of the Spirit. As we have seen every Sunday morning, the ritual gathering ends with many participants receiving a touch from the pastor. Some of the AG clergy I talked to also believe in a process some call the impartation. Here, clergy are thought to possess especially high

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[47] Glossolalia or speaking in tongues is the doctrinal point of departure or 'distinctive' for AG affiliated churches from some Pentecostal and all non-Pentecostal evangelical churches. This practice of speaking in unknown languages continues to mark off the AG lived ritual experience of churchgoers.

levels of a particular gift of the Spirit, particularly those who are known to be able to heal sickness, see an individual's future (words of prophecy), or perhaps have a particularly effective preaching ministry. They will, through laying on hands, transfer their power or gift (charisma) to others who are also in the ministry.[48] The laying on of hands also occurs between converts. Normally, the more seasoned will lay hands upon new believers to pray but occasionally also between two equals. Finally, there is a practice of transferring the Spirit's power to inanimate objects. Bibles, clothes, and olive oil are all believed to have the potential to carry the Holy Spirit's power, and clergy bless these objects to be sent home to heal the sick or for other answers to prayer.

So, the Holy Spirit is perceptually experienced as upon, in, and between AG participants. The Spirit is also understood by AG Pentecostals as being a fire, power, and as affecting the will.

Affect, Emotion, and the Will

Massumi suggests that emotion and affect 'follow different logics and pertain to different orders'. 'An emotion is a subjective content, the socio-linguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning' (Massumi 1995: 88). As unqualified intensity, affect cannot be understood as producing predictable behaviour, and 'neither is there a natural or necessary progression from affect to emotion or feeling' (Bertelsen and Murphie 2010: 148). So perhaps we should

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[48] This practice is debated as some argue that these gifts must be transferred directly from the Holy Spirit.

conclude that what AG converts experience during the Sunday morning worship ritual is nothing more than the qualified intensity of emotion.

When I asked Pastor Vinod to explain the difference between what happens in an AG ritual with what happens in a football match or rock concert, however, he was quick to distinguish the two. He said, it's 'not only just emotional but something else… different… you feel good, are convicted and have reverence for God, awe of God in your heart'. He used the word 'deeper' to express where the Holy Spirit is in relation to emotion and said that the 'Spirit causes the emotions… it is in me… part of me'. He pointed to the idea that the Spirit is not just something that happens in gatherings with music and loud preaching, but it also 'stays with you, gives you hope… is mine… me personally', he said, 'that is different from a rock concert where I return to a normal state after'.

However, while most affect theorists such as Massumi (1995) describe motivations of affect to be 'autonomous' and somewhat unpredictable, AG Pentecostals connect the Holy Spirit or affect to signs, signification, and the meaning system in that they believe that experiencing the Holy Spirit makes the word of God powerful and effective toward the listener taking action. Affect therefore renders content authoritative. As Pastor Vinod explained, while pastors do their best to preach a compelling sermon, they rely upon the Holy Spirit to convict of sin and draw in hearers towards repentance of their sin and accepting Jesus as their saviour. When AG participants describe their experiences of the Holy Spirit, they connect what affect theorists consider to be two separate systems. The truth of the bible or gospel is preached (signification and meaning system) and made compelling by the work of the Spirit (affect system). They also understand this connection theologically. A popular theme from AG pastors and thinkers is based upon Hebrews 2:4 and Mark 16:20 (NIV 1984) whereby the Holy Spirit, through signs and wonders following, confirms the word. As such, Holy Spirit force is necessary in that it bolsters the signified and

cognitively processed meanings toward action. A key leader put it succinctly, 'sermons about the Holy Spirit are meaningless without the power'. Perhaps these two systems converge at emotion, and it is emotion that drives the will to act. This is consistent with Grossberg's assertion that the 'organization of affect might include will and attentions, or moods, or orientation' as 'emotion is at the articulation of affect and ideology. Emotion is the ideological attempt to make sense of some affective productions' (2010: 316).

Conclusion

I suggest that one of the things that makes Pentecostalism compelling as a replacement hope is that it is experience beyond or perhaps deeper than logical and conscious processes. Most converts participate several months to years before taking the step of full conversion whereby old allegiances and identities are removed (sometimes marked by literally removing Hindu symbols from their homes). They, in faith, take the assurances of Pentecostal clergy as authoritative.

Affect has always been theorized in relation to emotion, sometimes even defined as such. I posit that, at least in terms of the Holy Spirit operating in the AG social, emotion is the nexus in which a connection between affect and language-meaning systems occurs. Pastor Vinod described the Holy Spirit to be 'deeper than emotion' yet also expressed through emotion. Conversely, we have seen that through experiencing the collective consciousness, anointed preaching and music, affect touches the emotions of congregants and is understood as the amplification of the Holy Spirit. So, affect is both part of the body and outside the body in relation to people and other objects, whether as shimmers, waves, etc., and is expressed and captured in emotion. As such, emotion is the medium, the in-between where individual spiritual capacity meets the social and the social amplifications

reach back to the individual toward driving the will to act. All of this perceiving and expressing of the Holy Spirit is made meaningful within the social's interpretation, in this case as proof that what the clergy has promised will happen because the power of the Holy Spirit is being experienced.

In the case of the AG churches I visited, there appears to be empirical evidence that the Holy Spirit as affect accompanies the logic and meaning making system, a parallel system that compels action to the point that agency can overcome social power. Affect renders Pentecostal teachings compelling vis-a-vis emotion (See Figure 2). These affective rituals are important in the struggle between good and evil that shapes the morality of Pentecostalism.

Figure 2: Holy Spirit as Compelling Affect

Decision, action, belief

↑

Emotion ——————————→ The will
Renders plausible

↑   ↑

| Holy Spirit as affect | AG teaching/promises |
| Non-cognitive autonomous | Cognitive logical |
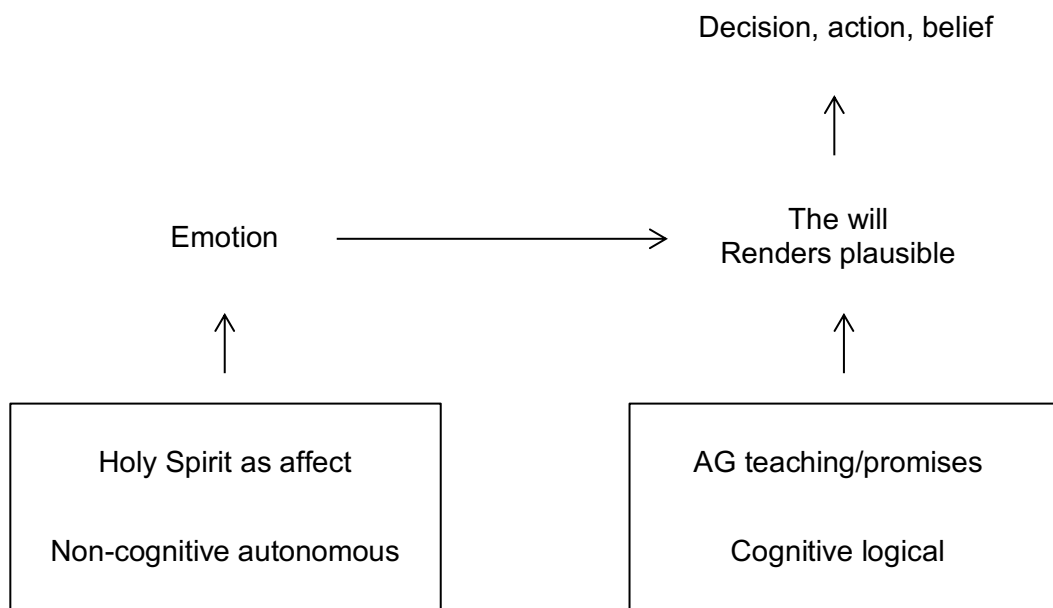
I have described the Pentecostal experience using affect theory to analyze the central AG ritual gathering. I have argued that conversion is made compelling to new converts, in part, because of the spiritual/affectual experiences that operate alongside the positive pragmatic logics of earthly wellbeing and eternal salvation. I theorize the Holy Spirit force as a separate but not fully autonomous system in that it accompanies historically situated emotional responses. Affect operates in concert with meaning vis-a-vis sacralization of experience, not in this case aimed at the veneration of a particular totem, but instead the Holy Spirit, embodied in clergy, so that preaching becomes authoritative. As such, individuals are moved by both the messages and logics of AG teaching and waves of affectual communication present in their ritual gatherings. These waves or intensities are amplified by collective consciousness, aesthetic effervescence, and charisma.

Chapter 6

AG Church and Economic Development

'A Hindu friend of mine told me, "you should try church… do you ever see Christians begging?"'

- 23-year-old AG convert

Introduction

In addressing conversion as exchange, I have argued that relational connections to existing lay members is key to introducing converts who are welcomed and assimilated into the AG community. I have termed this the Made Pure Embrace (MPE) and framed the participation and welcome as an exchange of sacrifices. The participation prior to baptism is a liminal period of crypto-religion where converts can try out Pentecostalism while continuing to identify with and practice their former religion. I have also described several inter-subjective experiences during this liminal stage that make a full conversion compelling. These include the importance of AG pastors who act as replacement *Brahmins*, *Pandits*, and icons a visible embodiment of both God and the aspirational desires of converts as well as ritual gatherings that render teachings of the pastors credible as a result of affective Holy Spirit experience. This chapter describes another aspect found in converts' stories or testimonies, positive socio-economic outcomes. This is captured in the following claim that my research assistant and key interlocutor for the study made in our discussions.

'Everybody who converts to AG Pentecostalism does so in very dire circumstances and most of them have financial difficulties, yet after a few years all of them are "ok" or solidly middle-class from an Indian economic standard and have bright futures given that their children are studying in good schools.'

We are taught as researchers that when someone claims, 'all of them', it is likely not true. Given that she was talking about people moving into the middle-class who have been generationally trapped in poverty, often living on less than a few dollars per day and with seemingly insurmountable challenges in a country that offers comparably little social welfare assistance, I was compelled to dig deeper. As such, I will explore the data gathered from oral histories, printed materials, websites, and a detailed discussion with Senior Pastor Vinod with respect to socio-economic factors. I will analyze these from the perspective of development theory with an emphasis on how social mechanisms may be used to disrupt the cycle of what has come to be known as chronic poverty. Specifically, I will detail how converts understand their transformation and how AG churches act as de-facto community-based development organizations that provide holistic approaches to the poor and disenfranchised.

I follow those who have used a relational view of poverty (Mosse 2007) to argue that participation in AG churches enables the chronically poor to embrace a new sense of their personhood, history, and social worth as well as exposes them to new relationships and experiences that increase their capacity to aspire. This is a truly holistic development where financial, relational, social, and psychological barriers are addressed.

Pentecostalism and Development

Religion has been mostly ignored by development scholarship from modernization theory into the 1980s (Freeman 2012). Yet from the 1980s, there has been a broadening to more holistic and multi-dimensional theories of development in which beliefs, values, morality, and

even religion are factored in (ibid: 1). In a volume dedicated to how Pentecostalism has acted as a development force in Africa, Freeman concludes that they bring 'moral legitimacy', changes in behaviour toward personal transformation and empowerment. They also 'reconstruct families and communities to support these new values and new behaviours' (ibid: 3).

The edited volume *Pentecostals and Development* concludes that Pentecostals are more likely to be funded by their own church members, are effective at producing high levels of participation, and transform individual subjectivities. Converts begin to change how they view themselves and 'reject passive, fatalistic beliefs and reclaim their agency' with a 'new sense of empowerment lead[ing] to new behaviours and new types of social relations' (ibid: 26).

The academic conversation related to economic modernizing is of most comparative interest. According to Robbins, 'Empirical studies of the effect of conversion on economic status are inconclusive' (2004: 136), although some report positive impacts on the poor that follows from Pentecostalism.[49] A recently edited volume, *Pentecostalism and Prosperity: The Socio-Economics of the Global Charismatic Movement* (although most articles were written within a theological framework) examines various case studies selected from a variety of global contexts and generally concluded positive effects of a prosperity driven church (Yong and Attanasi 2012). Most analysis in this respect has focused on how Pentecostalism ushers a path toward global capitalism (see Martin 1990). Anthropological studies of the effect of conversion on economic status are inconclusive with some studies concluding that Pentecostalism pacifies toward 'quietism' (Martin 1990) while others suggesting that it offers support for social justice movements (Robbins 2010: 171). Although Martin's theory, which postulates that Pentecostalism can eventually lead to wider social

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[49] See Annis, Willems, Martin, and Ireland.

and political modernizing, has been criticized (Robbins 2004b: 135), there is wider agreement that the church offers a space for roles of participation typically outside the opportunities afforded to historically oppressed peoples. In this regard, the AG of Delhi neatly fits Martin's analysis, not so much because of democratization in society in general, but by bringing socioeconomic uplift to participants.

A summary of the primary explanations for the causes and policy solutions to relieve poverty may help frame the more specific exploration of chronic poverty. Moore outlines three broad views. First, culture causes poverty when certain groups have innate characteristics such as laziness, dishonesty, and criminality that result in poverty. This view argues that policy should focus resources on the 'deserving' poor (e.g. widows, orphans, disabled) who are unable to help themselves because cultures of poverty cannot be 'overcome'. The second perspective is that poverty causes cultural values and behaviours that limit escape from poverty. From this viewpoint, 'cultures of poverty' with high prevalence of dependency, fatalism, risk aversion, and unstable families need to be altered in order for poverty to decrease, and, therefore, policies should focus upon culture change. The third outlook is that socio-economic structures cause poverty. In this view, socio-economic, political, and environmental conditions are passed down and continually reproduce restrictive economic and social structures. Policies should address these structures and provide social relief. Correspondingly, the values and behaviours of the poor will change over time. Structural realities are passed down inter-generationally as socio-political capital. This is 'critical in terms of its relation to changes in social structures of hierarchy and mobility. Many of the factors that are often most important in terms of one's power in a community are inherited, despite the intent of either party. These factors can include: race and ethnicity; caste; kin group and family "name"; nationality; and religion' (Moore 2001: 15).

Tilly's argument lies somewhere between the cultures of poverty and the structural

causes theories. He asserts that cultural categories produced over time result in the durability of poverty for certain communities. 'Large, significant inequalities in advantages among human beings correspond mainly to categorical differences such as black/white, male/female, citizen/foreigner, or Muslim/Jew rather than to individual differences in attributes, propensities, or performances'. These categories are complex systems of 'bounded pairs'. Here, boundary markers and corresponding categories are enforced by values, beliefs, and social organization. According to Tilly, 'durable inequality among categories arises because people who control access to value-producing resources solve pressing organizational problems by means of categorical distinctions'. The resulting 'systems of social closure, exclusion, and control' are dependent upon both the powerful and marginalized, even 'victims of exploitation' who 'acquire stakes in those solutions' Tilly 1998: 7-8).

In this view, social closure of creating and valuing categories in the unequal 'terms of recognition' where 'dominant groups withhold recognition, impose categories, judgements, labels, stereotypes, and secure deference, so as, not only to stabilize categorical inequality (Tilly 1998), but also to diminish dignity, bar access, and distort the view of themselves that members of an exploited or excluded group have' is foundational to intergenerational poverty (Mosse 2007: 30). Tilly's argument cements the intergenerational aspect of poverty through his concept of 'emulation' where valued categories or organizational representations are reproduced unequally across cultural contextual settings, and 'adaptation', the 'invention of procedures that ease day to day interaction, and elaboration of valued social relations around existing divisions' (Tilly 2000 as quoted in Mosse 2007: 19).

As Mosse points out, 'a relational view of poverty implies a relational view of power' and 'powerlessness… is not a lack of power, but subjection to the domination of others'. So, he concludes, 'a relational understanding of power draws attention to the systematic nature

of social behaviour, and so to structural views in which it is the constraints of the system' (Mosse 2007: 7-8). The caste system is exploitation and 'opportunity hoarding' (Tilly 2000) that is firmly held together by the shared values of both the exploited and exploiting, expressed in durable structural realities that manifest in social capital both as lack of connectivity and power inequality that, along with physical capital, are passed down intergenerationally.

Caste as Oppression

There is no better example of institutional categorical pairing and socially enforced boundary markers than India's caste system. Understanding Pentecostal churches as development agents in the Indian context needs to include a discussion of the *Dalit* struggle. Both Mosse and Joshi draw correlations between social movements and Christian fervour. Joshi states that the Naga, an oppressed group, desire independence given their political and economic situation. Naga nationalist movements that respond to 'brutal Indian army action' corresponded with 'widespread Christian conversion' and the revivals of the 1950's, 60's, and 70's (Joshi 2012: 10). Likewise, Mosse states that the mass conversions of the mostly low caste to Christianity in the 19th century throughout South India was a result of 'the rejection of social inferiority and affirmation of a positive social and religious identity'. A Christian identity provided self-betterment to groups that were 'denied access to sacred rites and texts, places of worship of their own' since it was a 'challenge to servitude' and the hope of upward mobility (Mosse 2012: 53). Mosse explains the politicization of Christianity in the *Dalit* movement and the corresponding conversions (2012: 28) as taking advantage of new social and political opportunities rather than taking up a new belief or 'alternate description

of reality' (2012: 54). I had no respondents speak of their conversion as any sort of political protest, but all of them sought a new reality.

The social institution of hierarchal ranking of endogamous descent groups known as the *jati* appears to be a perfect example of an exploitive structural system that results in durable poverty.

Dumont argues that hierarchy indicates how values are organized (1980). He describes the linkages between hierarchy and holism, how the parts of a whole are both part of the whole and identical to it, while contrary to each other (1980). Dumont's arguments are more useful for describing ideological formation rather than indigenous expression. Many have pointed out that Dumont might be used, for example, to excuse the horrors of a caste system that oppresses entire classes of people.

This is because he argues that all levels of Indian society universally accept hierarchy, individuals are subordinated to the social whole. What appears to be, from a western perspective, the structural oppression and immobility of individual subjects, is really holism. Hierarchy is 'encompassment' in which the low caste and impure fit inside the high caste pure, and differentiation is only a necessary ordering of the parts. When certain 'specialist(s) in impurity, who, in virtue of their functions, find themselves living permanently' in these roles, it is because 'in the setting of the opposition between pure and impure, the religious division of labour goes hand in hand with the permanent attribution to certain professions of a certain level of impurity' (Dumont 1980: 48-49; Marriot 1976). For Dumont, however, 'justice in the social arrangements which he would call a system, lies in the principle of holism. It means simply that all ranked caste groups have their different roles to play, have a place in the social order where their needs are catered to, albeit unequally. In a sense, Dumont's vision refers to a kind of collective security that excludes no one' (Kondos

1998: 35). Dumont's argument is that pure hierarchy is a state of mind to which all willingly acquiesce as each participates ideologically and upholds the system (Dumont 1980: 24).

However, Gupta challenges this view, stating, 'the fact is that the caste order is characterized by contesting notions of hierarchy and that is why we find competitive assertions of caste identity. These assertions draw symbolic energy and sustenance from origin tales that are specific to each caste and often in direct confrontation with the *Brahmanical* hierarchy' (Gupta 2005: 412). He concludes that the caste system is enforced by power rather than a universal ideological acquiescence.

Haynes and Hickel take up Dumont to consider that hierarchy might be the preferred mode of social organization, and though egalitarianism and individualism are key to what is good in the west they may be considered immoral damaging relationships and ability to 'make meaningful personhood possible' (Haynes and Hickel 2016).

They argue that western liberals conceptualize freedom as liberation of the individual from the authority of others, resulting in a dichotomy of individual and society (Haynes and Hickel 2016). Within hierarchies, individuals are connected with each other in an interdependence that challenges the 'freedom' of an individual. The individual, however, as they argue, does not precede society, but is a result of societal norms. Freedom and agency of the self is not produced from the individual, but from the norms and values that create the individual. They argue that it is the preferred orientation for justice and well-being in some societies. These communities do not want to abolish them and often reconstitute them in the face of liberal change agents, including Christianity (Haynes and Hickel 2016).

In a liberal ethic of enlightenment, the free individual in pursuit of truth is paramount, so the individual represents an authentic source of desire against the constraints of norms, rules, values, and beliefs that constrain individual desire. These understandings make

hierarchy a problem for the liberal conception of freedom. They imply that liberals who counteract these findings when they argue that the oppressed are reproducing the ideology of the powerful are fallaciously using theories of false consciousness.

Yet, can we, on one hand, justify hierarchy as a valid form of social organization on the basis of social construction of the person within certain cultures, and then deny an appeal to social construction leading to false consciousness as the explanation for why the oppressed embrace it? Just because the dominant social expression values an organization of hierarchy, it does not somehow undo the argument for agency, freedom, and equality, perhaps through conversion, for the oppressed.

It is helpful that Haynes and Hickel (2016) distinguish between hierarchies that are socially productive, especially when combined with mobility, in that they provide a structure to measure one's place in society. These social hierarchies are related more to difference and asymmetry and can also be described by egalitarianism in which individuals are understood to be ontologically equivalent (Haynes and Hickel 2016). Haynes has tied hierarchy to social mobility in the Zambian Copperbelt where wealth marked by consumerism and charismatic authority forms hierarchies in Pentecostal communities. Advancement or upward mobility are measured according to the hierarchical organization as movement up the hierarchy where some are being pulled up through social relationships (Haynes and Hickel 2016).

However, they also recognize hierarchies like those in Indian society where the caste system ontologically categorizes types of people and restricts mobility. They agree that it seems to be true everywhere, if given the choice between freedom and slavery, one chooses freedom and perhaps also equality. They also recognize that oppressive cultural values that shape individual agency might be in need of an upgrade (Haynes and Hickel

2016). Furthermore, perhaps not all would consider the caste system as a social good; those oppressed for example might prefer liberal conceptions of freedom and rights for their children. Even if Dalits consider the hierarchy desirable, even if they accept and defend the structure that reproduces their oppression generation after generation, it does not make it good. So, even if all Indians desire hierarchy as a social good, it still produces a structural inheritance of oppression.

Perhaps, most poignant to the discussion of social mobility in India is the issue of purity and contagion. It is understood that Hindus have substances in them that vary according to caste which are not meant to be commingled (due to the resulting pollution), social relations should be maintained within caste, and higher castes must protect themselves by maintaining physical distance from lower castes (Gupta 2005). So, caste groups mutually repel each other (Bouglé 1958). As such, both opportunities for labour and social relations are restricted for lower castes. This restricts mobility to devastating results described by Mosse:

> Dalits face the 'exclusion from public spaces (temples, water sources, teashops), from decision-making committees, from the services of priests, from the markers of self-respect and dignity (wearing shoes, carrying umbrellas, covering the body) — as well as hierarchical ritual incorporation through ignominious roles (as funeral servants, drummers), deferential bodily comportment, and exposure to sexual exploitation, all of which naturalize power and unequal rights to resources, still significantly underpinned by economic relations rooted in unequal control of assets, primarily land' (Mosse 2007: 23).

I think it is clear that Dumont's view legitimizes or masks the oppression of the caste system that continues to drive the scheduled castes below their twice-born counterparts in economic indicators, who then continue to be stigmatized and exploited. Dumont's view that 'the opposition of pure and impure… to such a degree that it merges with the opposition of superior and inferior… also governs separation' (Dumont 1980: 59-60) may more accurately,

given the empirical evidence that Dumont prefers to discount, be understood as socio-economic structures that are passed down and underpin the chronic poverty[50] of low caste and especially *Dalit* Indians. Vulnerability, risk, lack of assets, and exploitive social relations are directly related to the restrictions placed upon the impure. Multi-generational poverty becomes self-reproducing due to the poor's low self-esteem and fatalism that is perpetuated in wider social and religious regimes. The result is the willing participation of the poor in such an exploitive system (Hulme et al. 2001; Shepherd 2006).

What Dumont claims as willing ideological acquiescence of the lower caste into the system may just as convincingly be understood as relationally enforced exploitive structural inheritance. In other words, the poor face structural insecurity as a result of their relationships and social processes more broadly. Given negligible state social security programs, improvement relies upon breaking free from exploitive clientship and dependency that restrict agency. From this viewpoint, poverty is the effect of exploitive social relations marked by power inequalities.

Mosse concludes that 'Bourdieu's notion of habitus is useful because it indicates the complex subjective and objective demands of empowerment' (Mosse 2007: 40). He points to the work of a *Dalit* activist whose work involves 'changing assumed meanings and entrenched habits by initiating a process of "re-socialization" in which individuals and groups learn through practice to modify the distinctions and schemes that produced their disempowerment'. This work includes 'symbolic reversal' that challenges the 'strongly embedded habitus' and invites a violent reaction from those in power (Mosse 2007: 40). For the AG *Dalits* and otherwise chronically poor represented in this study, social exclusion or exploitive relational connections are firmly grounded in their caste identity and impurity.

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[50] I am defining chronic poverty as socio-economic realities or limited potentialities that are passed down inter-generationally, or the inter-generational reality of low caste and *Dalit* groups.

Conversion must be seen as the freedom from these durable exploitive categories. However, I found no evidence that first generation converts see leaving Hinduism and embracing Pentecostalism as a subaltern social or political protest. It does not appear that converts are contesting or subverting power through a change of identity or some sort of socially symbolic protest like mass conversion movements of the past. Rather, they work their way out of the effects of intergenerational power inequalities through pragmatic relational experiences that offer real rather than symbolic empowerment. It is also possible that there is an added social benefit of changing one's identity and losing reservations of Indian affirmative action programmes which Still (2013) argues is the new basis for discrimination.

AG cosmology and doctrine that God loves, forgives, accepts, and renders converts pure from past sin that I argue is made compelling by charismatic icons and affectually charged meetings now becomes real as previously excluded and marginalized groups are embraced. All, especially new, people are introduced, welcomed, embraced, praised, and celebrated (birthdays, anniversary, etc.) by a church social, many of whom are categorically separated and must learn a completely new habitus (Bourdieu 1977) in order to fit in a middle-class community. As I observed one Sunday morning, I noted the following: 'There is a sense of real community and love, especially among youth who hug, smile, and greet each other with words of praise, hugs, and hand-shakes… they seem to be joyous in their embrace of each other'.

Perhaps the greatest effect of re-socialization as a result of being made pure for first generation AG converts is the increase in their self-value and corresponding aspirational limits. If one accepts as true the boundaries of their own socio-economic exploitation and socio-relational limitations, they become, as such, participants in their own intergenerational poverty. The sum of cosmological, cultural, and structural limitations along with diminished

experiences through which they can expand a 'capacity to aspire' (Appadurai 2004) come together to create mind-sets and self-values that prohibit ascending out of marginality. If we also consider the chronically poor's on-going insecurity, we can understand a generalized lack of confidence and low levels of risk taking. Without slipping into a psychoanalysis of these converts, I would agree with Vinod that the AG social embrace and informal social security mechanisms may serve to expand the mind-sets of the chronically poor who have been constrained by a limited capacity to aspire.

This all comes together for AG converts in Delhi when they are about to break out of their previous exploitive labour arrangements by expanding their networks. Their expanded self-confidence paired with social security frees them from old power arrangements that they describe as oppressive, including those enforced through caste discrimination and religious and economic structures. This is truly dramatic for those who were entrenched in social networks prior to conversion as 'part of others' social capital' (Mosse 2007) and through the conversion process find 'autonomy and independence from binding relations of dependence' (2007: 31).

AG Solutions to Chronic Poverty

In using ethnographic material related to socio-economic uplift, I will follow a relational approach outlined by Mosse's later work that moves beyond political economic approaches, which he concludes 'largely confine the explanation of chronic poverty to the logic of economic relations of accumulation, exploitation, dispossession, or differentiation associated with capitalist transformations' (Mosse 2007: 18). I agree that these frameworks generally ignore the social factors, including new relationships, that I found to be of particular value to converts who overcame lack of mobility directly as a result of being welcomed into a

heterogeneous middle-class church community.

The AG church as holistic development may from first glance be achieved through the various schools, medical camps, and other mostly missionary funded activities that churches facilitate. American missionaries do understand social uplift as part of their mission. I met Doug Petersen[51] at Vanguard University in Costa Mesa, California, one of eight AG liberal arts universities in the USA. He is a charismatic guy with a raspy voice that makes every conversation sound like a passionate sermon. Doug is well known in the movement as a former missionary to Costa Rica who founded a large Christian school system in Latin America. Now he teaches future missionaries in his second career as a Pentecostal scholar. In his writing, he has challenged 'otherworldly', 'passive', and 'status quo', as well as 'spiritual' stereotypes aimed at Pentecostalism. He argues, with reference to the Pentecostal movements in Latin America, that they are social movements with 'social agendas' (Petersen 1996: 7). He points out that the most disadvantaged and marginalized, the rural and urban poor (Petersen 1996: 3), have been a demographic in which Pentecostals have flourished as a result of Pentecostal churches addressing 'the felt personal, social and spiritual needs of their communities' (Petersen 1996: 6). Indeed, most families report miraculous intervention that demonstrates 'divine concern' and power (Petersen 1996: 8).

I met Ivan Satyavrata at the graduation ceremony of Southern Asia Bible College in Bangalore at the time he was the president of the college, now the Senior Pastor of the AG flagship church in Kolkata. He is soft-spoken and completed his PhD in the UK. We spent hours discussing AG church growth strategy and the challenges that churches face in India. His view was that compassion ministries were at the heart of the mission. Theologians, like

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[51] I am using his real name given that he is a scholar whose work I reference.

Satyavrata, ground these social concerns in the holistic 'kingdom of God' theology[52] based on biblical scholarship. He argues in his writing that it provides a bridge between soul-saving missions to 'unreached' people driven by apocalyptic concern and 'expressing Christian compassion by ministering to physical and social needs' (Satyavrata 1999: 214). These social activities of AG churches are 'the inherent agenda of social action' (Petersen 1996: 90) of the Assemblies of God World Missions and local convert churches.

The most visible expressions of the AG missionary concern for the poor are the various AG social intervention programs that are funded mostly by missionaries, non-profit organizations, and AG churches from the USA.[53] Fundraising schemes like child sponsorship programs raise money on behalf of these programs and aid foundations such as Mission of Mercy (started by an AG missionary in Kolkata). The mother churches that I visited engage in a variety of social outreach programs including schools and other education offerings, orphanages, and children's homes, feeding programs, and widow care.

All three churches have education programs for slum dwelling children. Pastor Vinod's church operates one unrecognized slum school, and Pastor Irwan's church facilitates several informal study centres. Pastor Kapil's church runs a complete education system with multiple schools serving over 1,800 children with basic education, stationary, and uniforms. Many of these schools are licensed and recognized by the Delhi government. Kapil explained the motivation for starting schools as bringing a better future and making a better India by transforming the lives of children whose parents and grandparents have worked as rickshaw pullers, rag pickers, and other daily wage labourers. He also spoke of

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[52] 'The concept of the Kingdom of God, implicit in the Old Testament and explicit in the person and teachings of Jesus in the New Testament, is the unifying theme that provides a description of what life would look like under God's redemptive reign; that the reality of the reign the Kingdom of God is characterized by the ethics of justice, 'mercy, love and peace as its principle moral features' (Petersen 1996: 226).

[53] Some of these programs are also supported by Pentecostal churches in Europe and other parts of Asia.

schools as a tool to bring people into the church.

Beyond education, Indian AG churches often have children's homes that institutionalize 'at-risk' children. Two of the three mother church sites of this study manage orphanages that are foreign funded, and the third operates a government licensed shelter for abused girls in partnership with a USA based non-profit. This shelter is explicitly not a long-term institution but is proud that 95 per cent of the children who are served are restored back to their families. I toured this facility, which sits in a building in need of repair in the crowded unauthorized colony of Sangam Vihar. Pastor Vinod was passionate about the program. He is a trained counsellor, and I witnessed the gentle approach he takes with girls who have experienced trauma and abuse. He said the authorities from the Social Welfare council have been surprised by this shelter's results and 'send us the most challenging cases'.

Beyond their work to help children, AG churches in Delhi also have programs to service adults. These include feeding programs, widow care, health care camps, and a trade school. Pastor Irwan's church started a ministry to serve the poor and host a meal every Sunday, and Pastor Vinod's church operates a program for widows in the slum. Healthcare, another significant need for the chronically poor in the slums of Delhi, is also addressed by inviting teams from the USA and by engaging local doctors and nurses who stage medical camps. Churches also focus upon job training. The following quote from Pastor Irwan's church website promotes this effort in very pragmatic terms.

> 'We have started this program with an aim to make the poor people self-dependent. Our job-oriented courses like computer, tailoring, beauty parlour, and English-speaking courses ensures them to get a good job or start something of their own. Today, we are happy to see thousands of these people settled and living a happy and peaceful life.'

Providing assistance to the most vulnerable of society is rooted in Christian values that are part of local social discourse as well as foreign donor churches. As such, the value of helping the needy is a shared AG value, and as we will see, USA donors place high value on ministries that do such work. As ubiquitous as these programs are, one may assume that they also fuel the growth of AG churches. However, converts did not include, in the oral histories that I gathered, participation in para-church programming as the reason they attended church or converted. Somewhat more surprising is the fact that the pastors and informants I relied upon claimed that the activities of the church proper had the most significant outcomes with regard to socio-economic uplift.

We have already noted that political Hindu proponents doubt that Christian converts make the leap to Christianity based upon the merits of the religion itself and believe that Christian proselytizers use coercive economic incentives to lure poor Hindus toward conversion. They claim that Christians take advantage of the deprivation of prospective converts and offer them economic incentives.

AG clergy and missionaries are aware of these Hindutva claims. As a result of this concern, they teach against rice Christian conversions and theologically reject any sort of *quid quo pro* exchange in which acts required for conversion result in a payment, job, school admission, etc. Given these values, they reject out of hand criticisms of political Hinduism and deny any sort of pay for conversion arrangements. They argue, rather, that social ministry is the natural outcome or expression of the compassion that results from being a disciple of Jesus.

Nonetheless, there is clear evidence of a lived religion that prioritizes evangelical proselytizing and the utilization of compassion ministries as tools to gain conversions. I happened to have an impromptu conversation with a junior pastor about the subject. His

response captured the perspective of my key interlocutors well: 'Social ministry… Pentecostals are most likely to serve the poor. First, in order to reach them with the gospel as we first meet physical needs then can also help spiritual needs… it is a better way of reaching the masses. Second, because of compassion on needs, and third, because Jesus did (these type of things) as example'.

My aim is not to adjudicate the Hindu anti-conversion claims or the question of the authenticity of AG conversions. I believe an accurate description reveals that deprivation and a desire for social inclusion and security at the very least motivate chronically poor Hindus to try out Pentecostalism. It is participation in the church community itself, where a new social world opens up with positive experiences and upward relational connections, which is credited by those I talked to at bringing hope.

Social and Economic Uplift and the Local Church

AG churches' success in moving people up the socio-economic ladder is not simply a matter of preaching a value grounded in the prosperity gospel. Rather, months of participation and discussions with key leaders revealed very specific ways in which congregations help each other, especially new converts, to assimilate into their middle-class social. In doing so, their standard of living is raised, and in many cases intergenerational poverty is reversed. A process whereby formally Dalit slum dwellers became able to send their children to prestigious universities is worth describing.

I sat down with Pastor Vinod after dinner at his flat and asked him about Mercy's claim that low-income converts all are raised to middle class status. We sat as usual with a group of young men, lay leaders, and junior pastors that were always hanging around. He

was especially passionate about the subject and eager to talk. He started by explaining that all new converts are 'in problems' that 'they cannot handle'. His view was that, other than those who come for help with demon possession or spiritual oppression, nearly every new participant is poor. He pondered a moment and then said, 'we are community minded and help each other succeed'. I immediately thought of Dumont's holism and asked, 'so, instead of finding value only in their individual success, your people find value in helping each other'. He agreed and said a questioning tone, 'I don't understand how they become better… their lifestyle change?' He was not sure but explained, 'they want the best for their children' and 'they help each other find the best schools and recommend for each other'. The expanded relational network within the church is crucial to their ability to be accepted in institutions outside the church. Helping each other is a value that is passed along, as Vinod put it, 'when they become good, they also help others'.

At that point he motioned toward the guys that were seated across from us and said, 'for example, Vinay's family was in a hut and Asheesh was in a hut'. He explained that their families lived in a slum without proper sanitation, and now one was a chartered accountant and their two sisters married Americans, and while their mother began working as a maid, she learned English and 'now is married to a big guy'. It was a remarkable moment to be asking about socio economic uplift while unknowingly sitting in a room with young men who had seen a complete change of their own fortune. It was not a fabricated story of a boastful exaggerating Pastor. We were in that moment surrounded by people whose stories of uplift were remarkable.

Then he stopped and looked up, thinking. He said, 'let's see, has anyone gone down or stayed the same', inviting the others to find examples. He could not think of a single person, then said, 'maybe some of those in middle class still remain the same'. Then he

answered my question, directly agreeing with Mercy, 'no one stays desperately poor… none… it's true'.

Social Embrace

So, what are the factors that make the AG churches almost unbelievably successful at helping the chronically poor? The initial factor might be the most important. The embrace of a supportive middle class church that promotes equality opens up a new social world of experiences. Mosse, following Tilly, argues that subordination of the chronic poor is the result of unequal categories that by themselves create structurally unequal opportunities for some groups. He argues that the stereotype and culturally shared belief that disadvantaged groups are 'impure', 'backward', or ignorant follows structural-categorical disadvantages (Mosse 2007: 19). Government affirmative action in the form of reservations for Scheduled Tribe (ST), Scheduled Caste (SC), Backward Caste (BC), and Other Backward Caste (OBC) groups has attempted to engineer opportunities for inter-generationally oppressed groups, yet organic upward mobility through relationships lies outside of public policy purview and is socio-culturally restricted.

Haynes' concept of 'moving' in Pentecostal communities in Zambia, where upward social mobility is experienced by adherents, is achieved through both material and social advancement (Haynes 2016). The value of moving is made up of the values of charisma and prosperity, or as I describe in the AG of India, ministry productivity and money. Moving occurs, as Haynes observes, through relationships between individuals with high and low economic status. Those with high economic status assist others with money and connections that help them rise up. The person who moves up then subsequently helps others to move up (Haynes 2017). This accurately reflects the AG churches in Delhi.

On any given Sunday across the city of Delhi in AG and other churches, a low-

income, low-caste slum dweller can walk into a church and be embraced by well spoken, well dressed middle-class Christians. Pastor Vinod credited the psychological benefits of mobility. He explained by inviting me to imagine with him what it would be like to be low caste. 'If I am low-caste, I am nothing', but when called and welcomed into a house meeting and treated equal to others, an equal place to sit, allowed to eat food with them, and have their love and respect, it is life changing. He said in his church he did not have those who think they were 'too high' or 'too rich', other than 'only one guy who will only talk to the pastor'. He then used his hands and motioned toward the floor saying his middle and upper middle class 'reach down' to the level of the poor. Then he provided me with examples, 'I have an A grade scientist, she is a Sunday school teacher. The kids come from very poor backgrounds, they say, "she is so big yet still she is my teacher"'. Then he provided a mental picture, 'If you see them, a doctor and slum fellow', you think, 'no way they can be connected, but in the church they are connected'. He contrasted this response to donating blood, an act that is challenging in Indian society because of the values against contagion. He said, 'if I make an announcement, immediately 10 [people] will come front', resulting in more volunteers than what was needed. His final example referred to benefits of belonging to the church with regard to health care. He told me about how the nurses and doctors from AIIMS[54] who attend his church get their fellow low-caste church believers admission into the hospital.

If social exclusion marks the *Dalit* community's experience of Indian society in general, social embrace marks their experience within an AG church. I have already described the multiple symbolic ritual acts in which each attendee is welcomed and celebrated. Sunday worship gatherings include birthday and anniversary announcements, publicly stating prayer requests, and corporate prayer for the needs of individual families

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[54] All India Institute of Medical Science

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and sometimes even laying on of hands where the untouchable is touched. There is also a full embrace of new individuals to fully participate in community gatherings that involve eating and playing together. This all occurs in a mixed caste setting that likely has a deep psychological impact on the previously excluded or impure.

It was one particular occasion that solidified, in my mind, the effect of reversing discriminatory practices and empowering the formally disenfranchised. 'I am witnessing a miracle', I thought to myself. I sat on a plush couch with ornate hardwood carved armrests holding my tea, looking up to a vaulted ceiling in a wealthy businessman's well-appointed home. He was questioning his advisor about his business dealings. The participants of the meeting and the roles that they were assuming were more than fascinating considering that even having a conversation over food and tea would normally be impossible given caste purity socio-cultural norms. He was the owner of the home and of a successful liquor distribution company that serviced the state of Punjab. Ruby, on the other hand, was everything wrong in terms of historic hegemonic structures of India. She was the wrong gender (female), the wrong age (not yet 25), uneducated (not yet 10th pass), and scheduled caste. She lived in a local slum down the hill from the large home in Shimla. I had visited her home on multiple occasions. It had a low ceiling, tin roof, no inside toilet, and was just large enough for a queen-sized bed, a small metal armoire for clothing, and a small hutch for kitchen supplies. The toilet, along with a space for cooking, was outside. Her job was to clean the public toilets in the slum.

Despite these usual identifiers, she did not identify with any of the trappings that would place her near the bottom of any version of stratification in Indian society. Rather, she was an Assembly of God church planter who had completed her one-year training program. She displayed her certificate in her home like it was a diploma from a university. She was a gifted preacher and teacher who had started multiple house churches that were dotted

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across the Shimla hill landscape. One of her converts was a well-to-do woman who was possessed by demons, who Ruby used the Holy Spirit to exorcise. After her deliverance, she joined one of Ruby's churches and eventually opened her home for a meeting space.

The thought of a high caste Punjabi inviting mostly low caste women to her home for prayer, preaching, eating, and having tea is itself far outside Indian societal convention. And now, I was witnessing a miracle, the husband of the convert asking for a meeting after church to discuss a major business decision. Ruby had grown in reputation, no doubt through her religious credentials, to the extent that she was now a counsellor to high-powered business ventures. Ruby methodically went through a list of choices, offered her advice and then prayed for the man that his venture would be successful. I drove her back to her house in my jeep where she then grabbed her bucket of water and dealt with the communal slum toilets. Now she lives in a nice apartment on the suburbs of Chandigarh with her husband who is the pastor of an AG church.

Re-Socialization and Habitus

These newly included, respected, and loved converts are also helped to move upward when the limiting physical and cultural effects of chronic poverty are addressed. A middle-class habitus begins to be expressed in practical ways as converts fit into their new AG social group. As Mosse concludes, 'any effort to reduce the condition of chronic poverty involves recognizing the cultural/physical effects of chronic poverty on human agency, which have to be addressed as a pre-requisite for challenging relationships of exploitation, acquiring a "capacity to aspire"' (2007: 40; Appadurai 2004). Developing a capacity to aspire is bound up with breaking from a constraining social habitus by addressing the effects of chronic poverty on language patterns and bodily movements. 'Habitus is the intimate social context

in which individuals acquire certain skills, demeanours, cultural competences, and dispositions'. Caste is 'no longer a premodern identity' but embodied constraining mobility by reducing social capital (Fernandes and Heller 2006: 512).

Joining an AG church, one is introduced to, and subsequently reproduces, a new habitus. There is a sort of informal training, helping converts speak good Hindi or Tamil, and learning at least some English. The slang Hindi and Tamil used commonly in slums is an obvious first impression that signals categorical impurity to prospective employers, business partners, customers, and school headmasters. Proper Hindi and Tamil of the well-educated is used in AG Sunday worship and, over time, picked up and adopted by new converts. Even listening to sermons is a good way to hear and copy higher class Hindi or Tamil. Perhaps the greatest language advantage is that congregants often learn some English. Being able to speak English within urban Indian settings is a clear symbol of having received a good education; almost every private school in Delhi is English medium, and government schools that use Hindi are thought to be far inferior. Tamil and Hindi medium meetings include western songs that are sung in both Hindi/Tamil and English. Youth meetings are conducted in both languages. In addition, all three main church sites offer an entire English medium worship service on Sunday mornings. This is a free language learning resource for church attenders. Improving language skills offers new converts and attendees a clear advantage in securing employment and even gaining school admission for their children. Pastor Kapil confirmed my observations and explained that they learn the 'language used by the pastor', which is always according to him 'good Tamil or good Hindi' or English. So, they learn 'jargon and terminology that is high' and it 'slowly becomes their language'.

A second practical informal training opportunity for AG church attenders is learning how to groom and dress middle-class. Similar to language, the type, condition, and

cleanliness of a Delhiite's clothes along with personal grooming signal his or her societal position.

Practices that converts adopt, including dressing and speaking differently, mirror the views of Periyar's self-respect movement, based on Ambedkar's anti-Brahmin ideas. Unlike the self-respect movement, however, their aim is to integrate into a middle-class habitus rather than make a political statement of individualism and egalitarianism. The adaptation of converts into the middle-class habitus occupied by AG Indian followers is perhaps more akin to the process of sanskritization, a process coined by M.N. Srinivas in 1952 as when 'a low or middle Hindu caste, tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently twice-born caste' (Srinivas 1952).

Pastor Vinod told me about this transformation and used the example of some street boys that the church is helping. He said, 'quickly' the first week they come from the street, they start taking a bath, dressing in a nice button-down shirt, and styling their hair. He continued, 'somehow they find money for at least one good dress and that is church dress'.

AG churches embrace previously excluded groups and help them learn high Hindi or Tamil and groom and dress to assimilate into a middle-class church social. The effects of social inclusion are analyzed below, but in no way exhaust the extent to which belonging to an AG community produces socio-economic benefits for converts.

Expanded Labour Markets

In this section, I will explore how church members help each other in the wider economy outside the church social. Multiple stories that I heard referred to converts who secured a good job or gained school admission with the help of other congregants or the pastor's

recommendation. The impression I had was of an on-going process of church believers seeking opportunities that may benefit themselves or others, resulting in a supportive yet informal job placement operation. Pastor Vinod told me, 'if a person does not have a job we help each other' and 'this is something very different than is experienced outside the church'. He continued with a sense of pride, 'we genuinely want to see each other come up' and 'in so many ways we help each other'. This occurs often without his involvement, and to this he says his congregants often go beyond his expectations.

Then he gave an example of a very poor Hindu widow who was physically abused by her employer. He said, 'she came, we prayed, and someone got her a job in another place' and then 'she got a little more money' and 'now has asked me to get her children admission in JMC (Jesus and Mary College)'[55]. He explained that she could even afford to put them in a school hostel.

This is the opposite of what families experience in slum communities, which are marked by cutthroat competition. The slum dwelling poor depend upon informal labour markets with brokers that enable a system of exploitation. They have little protection and few options in terms of how they sell their labour (Mosse 2007: 22). Outside of the alternative church labour market, the poor make concessions and adaptations that contribute to their own exploitation. Vulnerability creates a high dependency upon contract-employers and their own self-interest, therefore driving them to participate in an exploitive system. This is 'the effect of power on their own agency — to relations of exploitation and the durability of poverty' (Mosse 2007: 28).

AG middle-class members help new converts and provide a bridge to less exploitive labour opportunities. They do so by recommending, requesting, and vouching for their fellow

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[55] Jesus and Mary College is a premiere women-only college affiliated to the University of Delhi.

AG churchgoers when they hear of open positions. Pastors and other more prominent church members serve as references for those trying to break into higher paying jobs. This internal assistance also extends to small business owners and skilled labourers in the church who are employed by or referred by other members. There are advantages to using businesses from the congregation, as they are more likely to give a fair price and complete the work. I experienced this first-hand. A few weeks after moving into a rented apartment, my air conditioner stopped working. My landlord was in the process of arranging a repairman, but the process was slow. So, Mercy recommended that we use someone from the church. I agreed, and two repairmen who looked like teenagers but were likely in their twenties showed up only a few hours later with a small cloth bag of a few tools. They greeted me at the door, 'praise the lord Pastor' using the standard greeting believers give to their pastor and foreign visitors. I thanked them for coming and it quickly became apparent that they had very little knowledge and likely no other jobs that day. I ask Mercy and she admitted that they had only recently started their company. And then she said, 'it is better to use believers anyways because they will not cheat you by asking too much'. I understood the increased trust and the internal social pressure they would have to provide a good service at a reasonable price. Yet, it was also clear that servicing the AC's of the church network allows for new entrepreneurs to earn while they are learning and developing credibility over time.

Social Safety Net

The durability of poverty directly leads to and is maintained by social insecurity that holds the poor in a perpetual state of concern, therefore restricting agency. AG churches in Delhi also provide security to families that are on the edge of financial collapse.

The common financial backup for families living in slums, in day-to-day subsistence economies, and who experience unexpected financial pressure is to find an exploitive loan shark. Such hardship loans burden families and make their escape to the middle-class all but impossible. In contrast, I learned that AG congregations function as social safety net during unexpected financial crises. Rather than providing interest loans, AG church pastors take offerings for specific needs on Sunday services, pool funds, and encourage simple generosity between believers. The pastor seems to be the key to this process. If he deems a cause worthy to support, the rest of the congregation follows suit. Pastor Vinod explained to me how the process works. The pastor initiates and says, 'let's take an offering to help this guy'. He says normally it is individual members who give rather than using general church funds that are used only to provide provisions. He concludes that no one 'who comes to church is hungry'.

In other cases, groups of believers develop informal savings cooperatives where members take turns withdrawing pooled funds, give '20 20 rupees', and use the funds to help in times of need. Another expression of the social safety net is during times of sickness. Few in India have any sort of health insurance and illness that require hospitalization or surgery is a nearly insurmountable financial burden for the poor. During my years as a missionary the most common financial request was medical costs. A common practice, according to Mercy, is that when someone gets sick in the church people will visit the hospital and give money. This represents '1,000-1,000 funds (approximately 11 GBP) every month to help the needy'. Pastors also take offerings in their church to help other pastors with medical emergencies. Pastor Vinod said with pride, 'if I get admitted, no need to worry, they will take care of me'. Finally, churches sometimes provide no interest loans and help with out of the ordinary costs like annual school fees. Vinod concluded, 'if [the] pastor is good he can do many things.' The social safety net provided by AG churches is certainly

another part of how converts are assisted out of subsistence poverty.

Overall, my observation is that AG churches are heterogeneous communities in which the middle class and desperately poor are brought together in relationship. The result is that those with means help those in need. This is contrasted with slum societies that are described as competitive and combative. I sat down with a group of pastors on a Friday afternoon at Pastor Vinod's house and we talked about the power of mixing. There were four pastors, two of them older and two junior pastors that work under a senior pastor. They talked openly back and forth and I sensed it was both an opportunity to enlighten me as well as a teaching moment for the juniors. Vinod, the senior leader, did most of the talking and would often summarize the points. They contrasted 'Indian society versus the church' and concluded the central difference was the strength of the community bonds. They agreed that in the urban 'setting we don't care or even know our neighbour', and in the slums, where there are close knit communities, everyone is poor. He said, 'you're also like that and I am also like that, so, how to lift?' In the church they say its different, the desperate, poor, middle, and upper middle classes are 'all brought together in relationship'. So, 'they have a ladder and help up, they have different exposure to new opportunities'.

The group then turned to the subject of financial discipline, crediting the practice of tithing as a way to learn the 'principle of giving'; 'if you give more you get more'. They agreed that when they give to each other 'they are motivated by their own blessing and helping others as well as obedience and fear of God'.

They then moved on to talk about church culture that 'rejects selfishness and embraces generosity.' Vinod again made a distinction, 'in [the] slum, even if you have 10 rupees, your neighbour will try to steal it from you. In the church, one has 10, another 100. The one who has 100 will give 10 to the one who has 10. Slowly, like this, everybody is

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brought up'. And 'if everyone gets [a] job and better salary, the church income also grows higher'. Perhaps now viewing their churches as a business, they agreed that even if the congregation does not get bigger, it will increase its income 'as everybody helps each other up'.

Finally the discussion returned back to the importance of mixing, but this time the language was related to caste boundaries instead of purely financial concerns. Vinod again summed up the discussion, 'only in the church we mix. Even government quarters divide the sweepers from middle class roles.' He continued, 'we value love. We provide respect to everyone and value everyone'. 'Only in the church will the poor be allowed to come sit, have tea, and be respected'. 'The obvious point of transformation is the mobility'. It is 'the main difference between us and the rest of Indian society'. Then as they reflected further, someone mentioned that there was sill a problem with gossip and jealousy. But Vinod interrupted, and said, 'we shame that behaviour' and 'we consider it deviant'. But it is true he admitted, 'gossip is last bit to change from the way they were in the slum.'

Conclusion

I have framed the socio-economic struggle of the AG converts that I interviewed within the larger debate around chronic or inter-generationally transmitted poverty, specifically grounded in *Dalit* poverty that has spanned generations. I follow Mosse who picks up Tilly's basic argument that poverty persists through relationally enforced 'exploitation and opportunity hoarding' where 'inadvertently or otherwise, those people [who control access to resources] set up systems of social closure, exclusion and control. Multiple parties—not all of them powerful, some of them even victims of exploitation—then acquire stakes in these solutions' (Tilly 1998: 8 as quoted in Mosse 2007: 20). Caste as a socio-cultural tradition

and value system has been institutionalized in India around socio-economic opportunity in exactly the way Tilly describes, and as such, perpetuates poverty and its durability over generations.

Converts are made pure, accepted as worthy and capable by the AG social, protected from traumas, re-socialized into new language, manners and dress, and introduced to new exchange markets that offer uplift by increasing the value of their labour and the reach of their enterprise. They are made pure in theological declaration of the saving power and forgiveness of Christ. They are made pure by inclusion into a middle class social where terms of participation are based upon a cooperative and compassionate value system. They are made pure by a re-socialization project that pulls them toward the middle class. They are made pure through expanded labour opportunities and markets.[56] Together these represent a re-socialization project, symbolic reversal or re-mythologizing, and the re-cosmologizing that is precisely the complete break required for Dalits held in marginalization and structures of oppressive power. The socio-economic transformation stories of AG converts from chronically poor communities debunks the ideal that certain groups are somehow genetically or innately poor and hopelessly trapped in cultures of poverty. They also point to a restraining habitus that must be transcended in symbolic reversal.

This takes us to the second conversion exchange where the benefits of AG participation are tied to prosperity gospel logics that demand high levels of commitment, including leaving past religions and moving out of a liminal stage to authentic conversion.

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[56] Not reflected in the empirical evidence of this study is also the potential collective power and voice within the political landscape of India as part of the Christian minority community.

Chapter 7

Safe Secure Future Exchange

Introduction

In this chapter, I will explore the second conversion exchange that culminates the conversion career story. Authentic conversion is the ultimate goal of AG missionaries and Indian churches. Here, I continue to centre the analysis of AG Christians in Delhi in what Coleman describes as a second phase of enquiry that explores not only the why questions but also how prosperity interacts with 'wider aspects of believers' lives and self-understandings' (2015: 37). By exploring moral identity of three protestant groups in Chesapeake Bay, Virginia, Bielo describes what it means to be 'born again', or the separation of a 'new' life from an 'old' life in which one's heart is at the centre of the 'true self' and 'true' intent. Bielo describes what Pentecostals experience as a duality of heart and mind, which is separate from flesh and worldly incentives and ethics (2004). Roberts describes conversion 'not as the subordination of a previously autonomous subject but as a movement of persons from one subjectifying regime to another' (2012: 276).

Tomlinson takes a middle ground between conceptualizing conversion as rupture with the past (Robbins 2004) and conversion as occurring through a new religious identity that is formed within a continuing culture by arguing that the repetition forwarded by Kierkegaard represents both the continuation of a durable culture and a transformative act (Tomlinson 2014). Conversion is therefore, according to Tomlinson, both a continual process in which contexts are changed and repeated (2014).

Whereas the first exchange of the conversion process (MPE) required only participation with free gift logics and the benefits of AG social and cultural life, the second

exchange is based on prosperity gospel exchange, logics sourced from AG paradoxical truths, that are used to demand that converts take on a new singularly devoted religious identity, sacrifice their time and money, and break from the past. Their reward is the assurance, a bundle of meanings that I call Safe Secure Future (SSF). I will explore these exchanges through the gifts as reciprocity and the free gift literature of the Indian *Dan* or *Dana*. I will argue that at the second exchange the illusion of a free salvation is unmasked, and the power dynamics of religious mediation are exercised as a replacement of prior oppressions, including the regime of Hinduism, with a new AG regime. The trap as such is closed, the try it before you buy it offer comes to an end, and payment is required. I will demonstrate that the transactional *karma* logics underpin the prosperity gospel teaching, which sets the terms of the SSF exchange.

The Nature and Temporal Conversion Types of Assembly of God Conversion Careers

Most stories do not align with the AG ideal type based upon the Pauline conversion narrative from the book of Acts 9:1-31 (NIV 1984). This ideal type of the born-again experience involves a sudden spiritual change as a result of conviction of sin that leads to an emotional response, devotion, and faith in which one is convinced of the truth and makes a total commitment.

Nearly all of those who shared their stories reported a gradual move toward adoption with starts and stops. Though the life histories of AG converts in Delhi include similar elements, they are by no means homogeneous. Only those that report dramatic healings from physical ailments or spiritual oppressions or possessions complete the process within a year. These are the exceptions, however, with most taking at least two and many over five years. Three general types emerged. The first represents the Pauline conversion, which was

only present in one story that I heard in which a miracle was immediately followed by the abandonment of Hindu symbols. The second and third temporal types are much more common, with the second occurring once miracles happen over time and participants remain in crypto-religion for several years, and the third occurring after participants have realized the social and financial benefits of being part of the AG social. For the second and third types, prospects evaluate whether Jesus is working and if their life is improving in terms of peace, joy, relationships, finance, and health. In the case that miracles are not experienced, prospects may continue their Hindu practice and are more likely to secretly practice Hinduism even after baptism.

Why Leave Hinduism?

Prior to describing the second exchange of the conversion process, it is helpful to account for why prospects are open to change in the first place. What about their day-to-day realities and the failure of their religion compel them to 'take baptism'?

In previous chapters I have described converts' stories with several common themes. First, they hope to remedy real life difficulties and decide to try out the AG because their old religion failed to meet their practical needs. Yet, by the time they were ready for baptism, they come to believe that Hinduism is not just failing to meet their needs but also inherently responsible for their problems. Given that my interactions with converts were subsequent to them completing the conversion process, their negative views of Hinduism may be a result of them accepting or repeating the AG Pentecostal knowledge that demonizes Hinduism.[57]

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[57] Although the pastors deny talking badly about Hinduism, we observed it often in sermons and especially during the baptism ritual.

Many attribute past problems to spells, demon possession, or curses stemming from the witchcraft of jealousy (*jadu-tona*). These spells are thought to result in a variety of troubles from failure in business, sickness, and even accidents. Respondents say that these negative effects continue to recur until one calls a *pandit* to remove the spell and that these Hindu religious practitioners will in turn take revenge upon the rival. This becomes an endless cycle of revenge and jealousy and can result in a sort of competition between duelling *pandits* who benefit from keeping the cycle alive. So, although practiced Hinduism offers a remedy for individual curses through revenge, it does not offer an escape from the cycle altogether. This cycle is reported even when one consults tantric practitioners who claim to have complete power over demons.

Converts also report being frustrated by Hindu practitioners. Respondents say that, for every decision, they must take the advice of a *pandit* or astrologer for fear that doing things in the wrong way, out of order, or at the wrong time will attract evil spirit powers and result in failure. So, in decisions both large and small, even in replacing a water tap, rearranging furniture, naming one's children, choosing a wedding date, the location of a *puja* room, and going through rites of passage, they are completely dependent upon costly and time-consuming religious specialists.

Finally, Christianity is understood by converts initially to offer a better deal than Hinduism.[58] A junior pastor said it concisely, 'In Christianity you get a blessing for nothing while in Hinduism you first need to do something for your god if you want something in return'. More than one interview captured the frustration with needing to pay for everything in order to gain god's forgiveness or blessing. I met Manoj at a prayer meeting at Pastor Kapil's home. He was sitting in the back next to Mercy and I and, like us, mostly observing

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[58] Marcel Mauss rejects the idea of a 'free' gift arguing that all gifts come with expectation of reciprocation (1967).

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as the associate pastor led the prayer. He had only been attending church for six months but said he was going to study to become a pastor. He lived with his brother across the street in an unauthorized colony and worked as a day labourer. I ask him why he wanted to become a pastor. He said with a sense of frustration, 'in Hinduism if one sins they must give sacrifices… even people who are poor, if someone tells them to do a *puja* and says it's a must they must somehow do it'. Religious practitioners in Hinduism operate on a pay for service basis. He continued, 'religion kills people by forcing things on them'. I understood him to mean that for those living on subsistence daily wages, gaining the peace they needed by paying for necessary rituals was difficult. He then contrasted this with Christianity using economic logic; 'Jesus forgives us, teaches us what to do, and does not have expectations… gives us peace with freedom'. Mercy clarified his meaning of the last phrase as 'peace for free'.

It is worth noting here that none of the respondents I talked to indicated they left Hinduism because of caste identities or the impure status and discrimination they faced as *Dalits.* They did not self-report or consciously identify cultural critique, caste system, or feminist oppression as reasons for their move away from Hinduism. However, as we have seen, there is a strong anti-caste narrative in which caste distinction is understood to be demonic a teaching alongside those of God's grace, the Holy Spirit's power and promises of healing and provision. More persuasive than symbolic or political gestures, then, is the real lived experience of being embraced, considered pure. During participation as the first act of conversion, converts enter a liminal period where they are exposed to rituals that drive emotions, experiencing a personal loving God. These rituals render the teachings true, and along with being benefited socio-economically as a result of participation in a heterogeneous and generous AG church community, they are moved to a second exchange. It is here that the cost of sustaining their newfound life by becoming a 'baptized believer' is significant.

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The Cost of Conversion

An important part of the conversion process is how Pentecostals demand a strict break from the past. Anthropologists mostly agree that Pentecostalism emphasizes 'rupture, dualism, and moral asceticism' (Robbins 2004: 130) around the notion of 'transformation' (Martin 1990: 163) leading to converts consciously separating or breaking (Meyer 1999) from traditional cultures. It has been described as culture 'against culture' (Dombrowski 2001) and intentionally 'anti-syncretic'. This includes 'rituals of rupture' (Robbins 2003: 224-7) that relate to discontinuity as 'effective action' (Robbins 2004b: 128). Beyond water baptism, 'spiritual warfare', and 'spirit baptism' or 'infilling' create clear boundaries between converts and surrounding non-converts. The resulting dualism divides the so-called followers of God from followers of the Devil (Droogers 1998: 6) in which Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit protects converts from the evil spirits of their former and now religious others (Robbins 2003: 226).

Pentecostals preserve the importance of local ontologies including forms of ritual resistance such as spiritual forces, spirits, demons, and gods. These are effectively dualized by demonizing them and enduing them with negative value (Meyer 1999, Csordas 1992). Preserved ontologies are used to bring meaning to difficulties and solidify dualism by codifying the old, demonic, and difficult from the new, Holy Spirit, life of healing, prosperity, and eternal hope. This is most often portrayed by Pentecostals as an on-going battle between demonic false gods and the Pentecostal true God. Meyer's often-cited contribution to the discussion around dualism and demonization of Pentecostalism in her study of the Peki Ewe of Ghana is helpful at illuminating the processes of AG churches in Delhi in which the existence of local gods and the power of local *pujaris* and other religious practitioners is confirmed and incorporated as the work of demons. This on-going struggle is played out

through corporate rituals of prayer and exorcism as well as demands from AG pastors to flee from Hindu vestments and symbols including statues, pictures, threads, ceremonies, and festivals. Health and financial troubles are attributed to past participation in false and demonic religions to which the Holy Spirit is prescribed as the remedy. I add to the current discussion by defining the final decision and commitment to rupture as expressed in its central ritual, water baptism, as a sort of payment. Rupture is expressed in multiple small commitments over time including leaving Hinduism as a pre-baptism ritual commitment. The final exchange of sacrifices in the conversion process is when financial, spiritual, and eternal security offered by the AG church is purchased through acts of rupture that are symbolized in water baptism.

The high level of cost of completing the SSF exchange is the result of allowing new attenders to take their time in participation during the liminal stage. The social productivity that produces relationships with other laity and clergy, healings, promises of a localized gospel, affective rituals, and evidence of socio-economic uplift all work together to move participants to full commitment and confession. The demands of the final exchange, though, are weighty. They are still in the middle, torn between their previous social life and modes of security and AG relationships and promises.

Asheesh is a Delhi native whose background scheduled caste troubles moved him to decide as a young person to attend church after being invited by a friend. He was now 23 and sat with Mercy and I over a coffee, explaining his internal decision-making process to complete the final step of conversion which he called 'a big decision'. He said that his pastor, Irwan, guided him. Irwan told him there was 'no compulsion' and said if he 'was convinced that is the right time' then he should 'pray and make the decision'. I was reminded of the tactics of any salesperson who knows when to pull back and not seem too pushy. So, Asheesh 'fasted and prayed and continued to pray' throughout the day. It was a Friday, the

day AG believers fast in consolidation with each other. He said he became 'sure' and 'had to take baptism' and accept 'Christ as my Saviour'.

Varindra, the street fighter who was in and out of jail, described the social forces and relationships that weigh in on the decision. In his case, this was a struggle between his father's and his mother's advice. His father had allowed him to participate in church with his mother and sister but wanted to prevent this final exchange. He remembered the date he was baptized, April the 5th, 2004. He said he had 'bet' his mother the day before and followed through. Perhaps this was creating an added motivation for the final push past the barrier of pressure following the desire of his mother instead of his father. Only his mother knew about his decision and a few days after the fact, he told his father. His father 'was upset' with him 'and did not even talk' to him 'for a couple of months'. He said, then, justifying the means by the end result, 'but he observed changes in me' talking of his transformation to a peaceful law-abiding citizen. Even if a participant decides to take the step, the pastor must agree.

A candidate must complete several tests or hurdles that demonstrate his/her commitment prior to baptism. To start, one must get saved. Getting saved or accepting Jesus as your saviour is theologically understood as the real salvation act and is the mental assent of propositional commitment. The act is also often ritualized in AG gatherings. It may be accompanied by bodily responses such as raising one's hand, coming to the front during an altar call, or repeating the sinner's prayer led by a pastor. It can also be accomplished through a silent inner prayer or thought. Regardless of how one completes this act, it is a requirement that one acknowledges that they have accepted Jesus as their personal saviour as the only one true God. As such, they adjust their cosmological perspectives to conform to AG doctrine, especially with regard to salvation based upon the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus and the belief in the power of the Holy Spirit. They acknowledge themselves as

Christian and, consequently, embrace a new identity.

Yet a profession of AG propositional faith is not sufficient for authentic conversion. The cultural logics propagated by AG pastors in the second phase of the conversion process correspond to the version of the prosperity gospel that they preach. Self-interested and profit-maximizing tendencies are embedded in AG logics that frame the sacrifices of *Dalits* in the conversion process as a rational act. As Coleman concludes in reviewing prosperity gospel literature, 'Such action does not conform to secular assumptions of economic prudence but nonetheless is likely to contain a rationality of its own' (Coleman 2015: 41). In the Safe Secure Future (SSF) exchange, the rationality is high cost and high reward. Converts are promised benefits within a temporality that spans the remainder of the convert's physical existence in the life to come. These are dependent, however, upon following three broad demands that follow getting saved which are taught as necessary to realize the promised security. These are, (1) stop practicing Hinduism and the things of the world (sexual immorality, greed, selfishness, etc.); (2) faithfully participate in AG rituals and give financially; and (3) help achieve the mission of the AG by bringing and cultivating new converts.

Separate from the World

First, there is a demand to separate from sin. In the case of AG converts in Delhi, the authenticity of the commitment is demonstrated by following a set of ethical standards that go beyond intellectual assent toward a relational covenant agreement. This is explicitly not 'everyday' or 'ordinary' ethics (Das 2012; Lambek 2010) but instead a set of ethical commitments codified in a ritual space. The act of baptism is a formal public expression of a willingness to live out the ethical commitments. It is a symbolic act that marks the second

conversion exchange, a social contract between the convert and God, which is reinforced by the community. The benefits are realized as a result of following through with these commitments in mutually supportive relationships.

I visited Pastor Manoj at a home for girls where he worked during the week. He described his own conversion as a process of separation. His list included worldly, worthless, unclean thoughts, and attitudes. The goal is to obtain an intimate relationship with God. He described a somewhat passive process by saying, 'when we are ready he will separate us from what is not good'. The result is that 'he will make us a new creation'. He then distinguished between those who just attend church but are not 'related to God', who continue to be interested in the world by using an example from his own past of having posters of 'Bollywood actresses'. He then burnt these posters which were 'Satan's' attempt to take you away from God' by bringing 'sin in your life'. Then, he drew a contrast between the loving and gracious Jesus and the world, or the questionable ethics of one's old life.

The transactional logics that Indian AG pastors teach with regard to leaving the world directly relate the blessings of God with the ethical commitments of the convert. Teachings seem to display karma logics similar to the *Karni Bharni* images of the Hindu tradition (Pinney 2018). I recorded the following from various sermons:

- 'Depending on what we are on earth, if we obey God's word, we will have eternal life'
- 'Grace is provided, but you must stop sinning'
- 'When you are washed by His blood you will get eternal life, purity is necessary'
- 'Do not continue in sin, do not defile yourself, and you will have eternal life'
- 'Sin separates you from God, creates a barrier between you and God and separates you from eternal life'
- 'Depending upon our acts on earth, we will inherit hell or heaven'

Separating from the world also includes ridding oneself of all vestiges of Hinduism including, most obviously, the removal of idols, pictures of gods, and other religious symbols from one's home in addition to no longer wearing *bindi*,[59] *tilak*,[60] or red thread.[61] The contagion language was sometimes used to describe the impurity or negative spiritual forces of Hinduism. Rahul,[62] a 49-year old convert, described that during his liminal stage he and his wife attended Pastor Kapil's church. Before he was baptized, he would light *agarbattis* (incense sticks) during his Hindu prayers at home until his wife stopped him. Now he refuses to go to the temple and sings worship song to Jesus if he walks near a temple, a sort of spiritual warfare or defence he uses to not be 'distracted' or have his attention focused on the gods of his past.

Converts also agree to no longer participate in Hindu rituals or festivals. However, there is a practical reality for those who live in neighbourhoods that expect such participation, normally including giving funds to festival committees, kind of a religious tax. Pressure may also come from extended families that have the expectation of participation in religious ceremonies (like tying the thread), weddings and other responsibilities of practiced Hinduism. Asheesh described the negotiation of partial participation that was sanctioned by pastor Irwan who created a middle path. He said his Hindu family does not force him to participate in '*pujas*' but when they give me '*prasad*' (food offered to idols) that he prays and eats it. He feels ok about this because Irwan instructed him that 'if you partake in any of the

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[59] A bindi (Hindi: बिंदी, from Sanskrit bindu, meaning 'point, drop, dot or small particle') is a red dot worn on the centre of the forehead, commonly by Hindu and Jain women.
[60] Tilak**,** Sanskrit tilaka in Hinduism, a mark, generally made on the forehead, indicating a person's sectarian affiliation. The marks are made by hand or with a metal stamp, using ash from a sacrificial fire, sandalwood paste, turmeric, cow dung, clay, charcoal, or red lead (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2017).
[61] Kalava (Sanskrit: कलावा) is the sacred Hindu thread also called *mauli* or *charadu* in Hindi. It is tied by a priest on the wrists of all the people attending the prayer ceremony.
[62] Age: 49 years, religion: Hindu, caste: Venkatesh, born in Delhi.

rituals or eat things offered before idols, pray that "God would wash you with His blood, and cleanse you from all evil.""

Committing Time and Money

Beyond separating from the world and from Hinduism, those who want God's secure provision must also commit time and money to the church. The commitments demanded include participation in rituals, including weekly Sunday church services and various other gatherings (fasting, prayer, special meetings, and bible studies). Continued participation is understood as necessary to avoid negative earthly and eternal consequences. Congregants listed the following messages taught by their pastors in this regard that once again displayed transactional karma logics.

> ~ 'A Christian should read the bible, memorize scripture, pray every day, have fellowship with God's people regularly, pay tithes according to Acts 2:42 (NIV 1984), and evangelize in order to grow, now that they are considered a part of the church.'
>
> ~ 'Sunday services are most important, Friday fasting and prayers is second.'
>
> ~ 'If you attend church, good things happen; if you fail to attend, something bad will happen.'

Mercy, a junior pastor's wife, explained to me the pressure to faithfully participate. This exposes a clear difference in logic from American missionary counterparts who do not directly connect church attendance or giving with material or eternal benefits. According to her, converts both fear earthly consequences and have guilt so (they) 'don't even think of missing church' and even arrange their travel and work so as not to conflict with Sunday mornings. If believers cannot attend, they 'will take leave, asking permission and say that they will attend a different meeting'. They will be 'worried that pastor will think badly' and the 'pastor will mention if they do not attend' or they will 'receive a call or text if they do not

attend', and more importantly that 'Holy Spirit-powered wellbeing will be compromised'.

Followers are also expected to give financially. At a typical Sunday morning service, the senior pastor takes an offering as ushers pass gold coloured plates or red cloth bags through the rows. The pastor encourages generosity and at times invokes 'prosperity gospel' logics. Everyone present places their hand inside the offering bag as if they are giving. However, Pastor Vinod confirmed that although the majority of the crowd places their hands inside the bag, they do not actually give. Pastor Kapil admitted that the weekly offering is not so high and agrees that there may be empty hands, but explains this in a positive light that 'everyone has a desire to give' and 'when they place their hands inside the offering bag, whether to give or just to act, it encourages others to give and to believe'. This represents the desire for participants to conform to logics forwarded as part of SSF, as well as the effect that one participant's actions has upon others.

AG pastors might be heard preaching things on most Sunday mornings like, 'Give by faith, seek ye first the kingdom of God and all the worldly needs will be met by God', 'When you give God first priority, He (God) will take care of all your needs', 'When you are honest in your tithe and in other little responsibilities, God will definitely reward your honesty', 'Nothing is hidden from God and he does all things at the right time', if you 'give and be ready to die to the patterns of the world, submit your life to Him, he will change all of your situation[s]', 'Even if you are in a problem, praise and worship him, as victory is coming; many think, when God blesses, I'll give, instead, when you give, God blesses', and 'Give whatever you have to God, He will give you [a] crown everlasting'.

While it may appear paradoxical, the realization of worldly benefit and material provision is therefore communicated by AG Indians as dependent upon rupture from worldly ethical orientations and sacrificially giving time and money. These are examples of the

culturally embedded rationality in which sacrifice leads to prosperity (Coleman 2015).

Ministry Volunteerism

The final set of ethical commitments required is related to ministry. Ministry can be described as cultivating relationships for the purpose of bringing in new converts and/or strengthening one another through volunteerism and participation in a variety of AG ritual programmes, including programmes for children, youth, women, men, as well as those that target the needy, widows, and orphans. One's relative participation is tied to wellbeing and the promise of SSF. I heard a message at Pastor Irwan's church on a Sunday morning that demonstrates how the ethical demand of ministry explicitly uses karma transactional warnings. His message was about responding to God's calling for ministry by saying 'send me'. He told the crowd that 'God will use you' and is 'changing you'. He used words like devotion, duty, responsibility, obedience, and surrender to describe the commitment converts should have to answer the call. First, he suggested a debt that converts owe to God. He said, 'realize your condition' to remind them of the changes in their lives after participation in church. Then he continued with transactional logic using an illustration of a fruit tree that is covered when it is full of fruit. Fruit is a common Christian metaphor for productivity in ministry. So, the logic is that 'when we are faithful' and productive, 'God gives us protection'. He left the other alternative, no productivity and no protection, for the listeners to work out. God's protection within wider teachings can be understood as security. He concluded the message by saying that God wants 100 per cent and if 'we devote ourselves to God's purposes, give him focus, he will be pleased'. Every AG preacher that I heard would frame the conversion process as transactional and reciprocal. When the pastor is satisfied that a prospect has sufficient knowledge of AG truth, is morally acceptable, sufficiently devoted and no longer participates in Hindu practices, he allows the participant

or believer to become a 'baptized believer' through a public submersion in water ritual. I will now describe a water baptism conversion ritual that I attended.

The AG Ritual of Rupture: Water Baptism

Although AG clergy and laity use the term 'baptized believer' to denote a convert, mere propositional beliefs play a secondary role for converts to the relational dynamics of belonging and commitment (Montemaggi 2016). In Bialecki's study of the Vineyard church movement, he observes how evangelicals define difference between people with various access levels to the supernatural. Difference is defined by relationship with another, relationship with the believer, and boundaries between the group and another. The defining of one group as separate or distinct from another group facilitates the imagining of a relationship with that group, which can be influenced by various factors (Bialecki 2016). In the AG churches of Delhi there is a prominent distinction between those who have been baptized and those who have not. In this section I will describe a baptism ritual. It reveals the importance of baptism as the convert make a public profession of faith as the rite of passage into the 'baptized believer' category.

I walked to the rear of the building chatting with Senior Pastor Vinod, thanking him for allowing me to observe. Water baptism is, for Indian Christians, a rite of passage ritual, marking the end of the conversion process and a break with the candidate's former religion and past. Delhi AG pastors claim to baptize upwards of 100-120 converts every year. Each candidate is required to sign an affidavit stating that they were not forced to be baptized and no money was given to them. Though a public expression of an internal faith, I was told that it is best done privately with close friends and other church members present. This is especially true if foreign missionaries are going to be present due to fear of radical Hindu

nationalists. These anti-conversion groups also recognize that the water baptism rite is symbolic of one being no longer Hindu, and, for some, no longer Indian. Pentecostals have a concern that their churches will be persecuted by these groups. Stories of pastors being beaten, churches being burned, and coerced reconversions form part of the AG discourse. So, the gathering was relatively small.

As we reached the rear of the building that is situated in a posh neighbourhood of South Delhi, the crowd had already gathered. The building that served as the meeting place for multiple AG congregations with various languages[63] also served as the administrative offices for denominational leaders and other closely related para-church activities. Its overuse reflected one of the central challenges for AG pastors in Delhi whose congregations are made up of lower- to middle-class people and who cannot afford to purchase property. Instead, they grow and spread by meeting in homes or rented buildings. The building was out of place, aging, and in need of a paint job. It was one of the few in the colony that had not undergone major restoration, its condition reflecting the lack of funding designated toward upkeep. The baptismal tank was at the rear of the building.

The crowd had formed between the building and the iron fence that protected the property from the rear. It was a small area perched below a spiralling staircase connected to a second building that once housed bible college students, and now the residence of the pastor, a parsonage of sorts. The area was messy, cluttered with random items such as a broken exercise machine, clothes washing machines, wires, and various other pieces of discarded building or church supplies. Only a small percentage of the total congregation attended, consisting of friends and family of the baptism candidates, perhaps those who had led them to the Lord, other church leaders, as well as junior pastors and some of their wives. The mood was more cerebral than emotional. Unlike descriptions of Pentecostal rituals

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[63] These include Hindi, Tamil, English and Malayali.

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where awareness is challenged by ecstatic experience, all present were calm and thoughtful. As soon as we approached the crowd, Vinod disappeared from my side so I found a place near the back hugging the wall. My research assistant was instructed not to film. This indicated the fear of reprisal both for the pastor who conducted the meeting and the candidates. Somewhat spontaneously, one of the junior pastors present began to lead a chorus. Everyone including me joined in singing, first in Hindi then in English:

~ *Ishu ke peeche main chalne laga,* (I have started to follow Jesus)

~ *Na lautunga,* (No turning back)

~ *Sansar ko chodkar,* (Leaving the world)

~ *Salib ko lekar,* (Taking the cross)

~ *Agar koi mere sath na aave,* (Though none joins me)

~ *Inkar karna main duniyadari,* (Denying the world)

~ *Paunga taaj…* (Will receive the crown)

The lyrics perfectly captured the weight of the moment as the decision to follow Jesus also means to become Christian. For many, the result is a break from family and friends who oppose their decision to reject Hinduism. This is a weighty affair, a rite of passage out of a liminal stage of attendance to becoming part of the church proper. From now on, no longer attendees or seekers, candidates would be considered part of the social, the extended family, now allowed to participate in the Eucharist, and holding the higher title of 'baptized believer'. Pastors normally express the relative success of their ministry by counting baptized believers, the numbers they have sent to bible colleges, the number of branch churches (house churches/cell churches) with their corresponding junior pastors, and the number of Indian missionaries, those in more rural regions, who attempt to plant new churches. This was an occasion that increased the status of both the baptismal candidate and the senior pastor within the community, the pastor increasing his flock and

the number that he could call 'my believers'. These authentic converts who fill the seats of the growing network of churches in Delhi are the raw goods whose stories can be exchanged for financial support.

As we continued to sing, I noticed the crowd opened up, like a scene out of a movie about Jesus or the parting of the Red Sea. The man of God, mediator and icon of hope Pastor Vinod, descended from the spiral staircase. The bottom of the stairs opened to a pathway that had been created through the centre of the crowd leading to the baptismal tank. It was clear that the main actor in the scene had arrived; the special late entrance was sealed with him taking over the leading of the song, a clear movement of authority from the junior to the senior pastor. Junior pastors are generally not considered qualified to oversee such rituals on their own, and participants are normally only satisfied if the senior pastor conducts the ritual. The candidate considers the pastor who conducts their baptism their pastor for life, even if they move to a new location and no longer attend the church. There is a special bond in the conversion process between the senior pastor and the convert.

The tank is filled with less than clean, very cold water. The pastor entered the tank as the six candidates queued up, some of them visibly nervous. I could not discern if their nerves were the result of fearing submersion in water[64] or the emotional weight of their decision. It was no casual affair. In a sense, by the time the candidate reached this point, they were mostly solidly participating in the social life of the church.

The pastor now instructed the candidates. The teaching clearly reflected exchange logics, since as believers took baptism, they were taught that a strict break from Hinduism and high commitment to the church were required. He started with an introduction of the

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[64] Given that lower-income Indians in the city bathe with a small bucket of water, lack funds to travel, and have no access to public swimming pools, rivers or ponds, it is conceivable that some have never been under water.

importance of baptism and said, 'the heavens rejoice', 'you will be bringing glory to God', and read from Romans 6:3-7 (NIV 1984).[65] He then moved into demonizing Hinduism and said, 'worshiping idols is a curse', 'he created your palms so why should you show your palms to a fortune-teller', 'never compromise', 'don't tie any red thread in your hands', 'don't make an altar at your house, not even for Mary or Jesus', 'don't light the *agarbattis* (incense sticks), it's for the dead and we praise a living God', '*bindi* is Shiva's third eye but God has given us two eyes', 'remove all idols from your house', 'all these things are related to your past religion, you are now new, from now never follow these. You have prepared your hearts, it's all by God's plan for your life. God wants to deliver you from all bondage, only then you will be delivered you'll be a new creation'.

He then turned to a warning about commitment and said, 'there's no turning back', 'hardships may come but there is a responsibility along with commitment', 'even if you have to die do not turn back', 'when you drink or are an addict, people would not care but when you become a Christian, people will persecute you and pressurize you and abandon you. Be ready for it'. He continued with specific post-baptismal instructions about how the candidates should live after their ritual. He said, you must 'pray every day, read the word of God and memorize at least one verse a day, have fellowship with God's people regularly, evangelize many, and give tithe because if you are truthful with 10 per cent, God will bless you more'. He closed his remarks by saying, 'baptism is a command of God', 'baptism is an outward sign of inner transformation', 'the power of evil may attack you through religious/cultural

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[65] 'Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.' (Romans 6:3-7) (NIV 1984).

things like bindi, thread, etc.', 'be aware and careful'. He said a short prayer asking God to bless the candidates.

Each candidate entered the water one by one. Pastor Vinod placed his hand on their back and helped them plug their nose using his other hand to guide. He said, 'I baptize you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit' as he leaned their head back until the candidate was fully immersed. They were held just a moment under the water, then raised up and had various bodily reactions upon coming out. It was clear that they were now on stage, indicating in their movements and words the spiritual power of the occasion. Two of them began to speak in tongues, one raised his hands over his head, some bowed with their hands across their face, and yet another began to shake. Each was given a few seconds to react before being ushered out of the tub by the pastor, followed by him ushering the next into the tub.

The visible reactions were an example of the adherents themselves being icons. Their expressions of spiritual experience that were manifested in verbal and non-verbal signs solidify the faith of those watching, both the other candidates and the observers. Pentecostal rituals are left partially unscripted to allow for a variety of spiritual manifestations that proves to be more powerful in solidifying confidence than the scripted components. Scripted prayers and sermons are thought to be only the work of human effort, whereas sudden expressions demonstrate the presence of God through the Spirit.

The water baptism ritual described above is the public confession of internally realized faith, a rite of passage that marks the culmination of a belonging journey and the agreement to fulfil the requirements of authentic conversion.

Negotiating Resistance Post Baptism

The post-baptism experience includes an on-going rejection of Hindu cosmology, moralities, identities, and practices. The subsequent negative reaction by Hindu family members in many ways clarifies and solidifies the conversion process as they reject the decision and pressure converts to reconsider. Converts who stand firm and demonstrate their loyalty become *pucca* (firm or sure) believers. Bialecki describes how the Vineyard movement conceptualizes the idea of the 'body of Christ' as bridging one's individual part to play in the whole movement and creating a common identity amongst participants. This common identity is connected, in addition, to a sense of solidarity and shared moral character (Bialecki 2018).

Bialecki observes that the presence of existential threats, whether real or imagined, can cause a sort of nationalism within Pentecostal Christianity (2017). This nationalism is facilitated by external circumstances inherent in the Pentecostal 'part-culture' (Coleman 2006, 2010), and is a problem that Pentecostals 'find themselves inhibiting' rather than a 'pre-given structure' (Bialecki 2017: 44). This 'nationalism' is observed elsewhere in the anthropology of Christianity, including O'Neill's conceptualization of religious citizenship (2010) and Haynes' description of how prayer becomes political work in her study of Zambia's identification as a Christian nation (2015).

In studying Calvary Chapel Church, Bialecki observes a ressentiment 'where one is at once set upon and yet still automatically always in the right, and where ethical position and value are also thought of as set up in contrast to an opposing formation and population' (2017: 50). In this way, Pentecostals often conceptualize themselves in opposition to surrounding or other sub-cultures or persecuted by other groups (searching for religious freedom, for instance). This ressentiment also manifests when in the course of political

discourse, individuals are inferred to be aligned with a set of values (for example, with or against evangelicalism) (Bialecki 2017).

Bialecki goes further to suggest that by characterizing themselves alongside traits (not necessarily by a 'single point of adherence'), groups form a sense of religious belonging through ethnos in a way that is similar to belonging to a race (2017: 53). This bridges the gap between individual ethics and the collective social ethics of Durkheim. This ressentiment and conceptualization of one's own group as separate and distinct from others has facilitated the formation of religious nationalism amongst evangelicals (Bialecki 2017).

I argue here that anti-conversion rhetoric and family rejection of conversion crystalizes a separation of identity among converts and coalesces into a convert group that sees both an 'entitled future' given the special earthly blessings of the Holy Spirit, and eternity in heaven as well as being an 'embattled minority' (Bialecki 2018).

Conversion is considered to be a violent act by many Hindu religious leaders and voices of political Hinduism. The violence of conversion, from the perspective of the converts that I conversed with, was more the result of their Hindu family members' and communities' reactions than the proselytizing efforts of Pentecostals. Hindu nationalists especially target Pentecostal Christians in recently increasing incidents of violent reprisals. Many of the testimonies that I heard included post conversion experiences. Many faced a backlash that resulted in some form of segregation. Varindra[66] explained in his story as follows.

> 'At my mother's village they have segregated us, when I go there they tell me, "now you are not a part of us as you belong to a different *jaati* (caste), you have changed your religion". But I do not care about what people say, because it is Jesus who has changed me. Even my father was not happy with my decision, but when he observed changes in me, he was happy, but he did not accept Christ. All my family members now believe in Jesus but because of the fear of society they do not openly accept it.'

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[66] Male, born in 1983, heard about Jesus in 1998, baptized in 2004, age 29 years, born in Delhi, caste: Vaniyar Gowndar (Hindu).

Asheesh[67] explained his ordeal after he was baptized against his mother's will and without her knowledge after she allowed him to attend church if he agreed to never get baptized. He relayed the story, that his friend's brother accused him by saying, 'You would have been paid for conversion, how much did they give you?' This is a common anti-conversion accusation. He said his biological family, including his parents and three siblings, were upset and would mock him by saying 'Hallelujah'. They were also concerned about him marrying a Christian girl against whom they would choose, a very pragmatic disruption for Hindu parents with a convert son.

In some cases, violence comes from within the wider Christian community itself. Pentecostals consider Roman Catholics to be nominal Christians or in name alone. In one story, a Catholic employer rejected her AG employee's decision to convert and interestingly sided with anti-conversion cultural rhetoric of political Hindus. In Amrita's[68] testimony, she described her post-baptism struggle at the hands of a Catholic employer and how she overcame her difficulties. First, she approached her 'madam' and asked if she could 'take baptism'. According to her, Roman Catholics 'do not believe in baptism', by which she meant conversion, so she was not given permission. After asking again, she said the madam became rude and said, 'you have come from dirty drain, and you want to take baptism?', a reference that pointed to the pollution of caste. She continued her 'cruel' tirade by asking, 'will your pastor touch you and push you into the water?', perhaps assuming that he would not. Amrita ignored her employer, was baptized and subsequently lost her job and her accommodation as result. The madam told her, 'there is no work for you, we do not need you anymore, get out', and she was asked to leave the servant quarters.

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[67] Age 23 years, born in Delhi, religious background: Hindu, caste: Scheduled.
[68] Female, age 34 years, religion: Hindu, caste: Muthuraja, in Delhi since: 1999.

Pressures related to conversion are normally enforced by biological and extended families[69] who themselves are held accountable by their local community enclaves. It is outward expressions such as participating in religious festivals, wearing bodily symbols (*bindi*, *tikka*, red thread), and keeping household statutes or pictures of their deity that signal one's subjective regime. These outward signs are specifically targeted by Pentecostals as a baptism requirement. Crypto-religion, or secretly believing in Jesus and internally adhering to Christian doctrinal truths garnering less resistance, is only allowed in the liminal period between the MPE and SSF exchanges. Just as converts' families encourage them to stay Hindu, AG churches guide them toward complete rupture by demonizing Hinduism and teaching a prosperity gospel in reverse that correlates hardships to their past worship of false gods that are demonic. As both Hindus and AG Pentecostals value religious symbols of community participation over spiritual or internal meanings, converts are caught between two sets of social forces, each compelling them to dress, worship, and celebrate accordingly.[70]

All of the oral histories included descriptions of the everyday struggles that Christians experience post-conversion and the violence that results from rupture. The suffering and rejection of the AG conversion rite of passage may be understood as shared liminal experiences that serve to heighten communal bonds (Turner 1995). So, these resistance experiences may serve to solidify the move away from Hinduism and strengthen the relational bonds between Christians who have a shared conversion journey history.

SSF a Free Gift?

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[69] Many of the converts reported reuniting with their families after some time after they can see that we are getting better.
[70] Similarly, in the AG, outward and public symbols of sin will disqualify one from baptism whereas inward lusts or secret devotion to a Hindu god will not.

In this section I analyze the conversion exchanges that I have described using some of the well-formed arguments from Anthropology with regard to the Indian gift. Gift economies have been demonstrated to share the expectations of reciprocation not dissimilar to commodity exchange. Mauss, in *The Gift*, argued that gifts always demand reciprocation and are never free; but are carry with them a 'spiritual mechanism' that obligates the receiver so that 'the objects are never completely separated from the men who exchange them' (Mauss 1990: 31).

Jonathan Parry pointed to certain Hindu religious gifts as examples of free gifts that do not create the expectation of reciprocation. Gifts in the Hindu world include *dan*, unreciprocated to sadhus; *dakshina*, a gift as a form of remuneration for a priest's services; *bhik*, alms; and *sangita*, a small gift to make up for a possible deficiency in the central gift. The *Bhagavad Gita* emphasizes the importance of philanthropy without expecting anything in return, or *dan* (Copeman 2011). Raheja described these gifts as important part of religious rituals that remove inauspiciousness from the donor and transfer this to the recipient, normally a *Brahman* who is able to remove any resulting misfortune through rituals. These genuine gifts should never be solicited nor reciprocated with either social or physical rewards and should be given then in secret.[71]

Parry emphasizes that *dan* carries with it the sin of the giver, therefore, the recipient accepts this sin (1986). He accepts the concept by Mauss regarding 'the spirit of the gift' but rejects that the idea that this leads to 'obligations to receive and make a return' (Parry 1986: 463). Rather, the gift binds giver and recipient, as not only does the recipient takes on the sin of the donor but the donor also shares in the punishment when they give to an unworthy

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[71] As Copeman (2011) observes, Parry (1980, 1986) and Raheja (1988a, 1988b, 1989) show how *dan* is both a religious and historical concept found in Hindu texts, as well as a modern exchange associated with sacrifice, sin, and caste identity. Raheja (1988a, 1988b, 1989) shows that *dan* has multiple uses and is one form of gift exchange.

recipients or *Brahmans* who seek gifts but do not study the *Vedas* or properly perform rituals.

Laidlaw argues that *dan* should be understood as a conduit for 'spirit' rather than something with inherent properties of its own (2000). Osella and Osella support this argument by showing that, in a Kerala village, there are various conceptions that can be attached to the same gift (1996). Laidlaw also argues that the social significance of *dan* is the fact that it does not create obligation or personal connection, thereby avoiding social ties (2000). Huberman supports Laidlaw's argument by observing how notions of sin and inauspiciousness are associated with *dan*, but not necessarily exclusively carried by or embodied by *dan* (2010).

Copeman (2011) suggests that *dan* is frequently understood as a 'transmitter', per se, of spiritual qualities, because it is facilitated through social contact, and because of its usefulness in disposing of sin, impurity, and inauspiciousness. (2011: 1093). Parry also connects *dan* to salvation (1986).[72]

Laidlaw (2000) explored the Indian gift taking up Derrida's challenge of the impossibility of all gifts (1994: 10) and forwarded an Indian example in which lay Jains provide gifts to renouncers who, by the very nature of renouncing, were precluded from returning the gift or expecting any future repayment. This mostly met Derrida's boundaries of defining a gift in that no reciprocity in the present nor future was expected, as neither the recipient nor the giver recognized the gift. A gift was defined as neither engendering feelings of indebtedness, obligations, nor satisfaction, or gratification. He labels this type a 'free' or 'pure' gift. These tests are helpful in analyzing the AG conversion exchanges.

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[72] To others, *dan* does not relate to salvation (Venkatesan 2011). Jain followers conceptualize the *dan* as part of an exchange in which they can gain instruction and "karmic merit" (Haynes 2013: 91).

In Bourdieu's view, the gift's existence is facilitated by two forms of masking – that which is created by the time between giving and receiving, and the symbolic aspects of production – which prevent it from being conceptualized as part of an 'economy' (1977).

The first AG conversion exchange seems to meet Derrida's challenge in that by demanding only participation, it is only the act of receiving the offering of social welcome, prayers for healing, and promises of God's provision. Theologically, it is neither required nor possible to somehow work one's way to salvation as a free gift since it is impossible to repay God. The God of the first exchange is similar to Laidlaw's renouncer in that His very nature as loving and His act of grace would be undone if payment of any kind were to be demanded. However, the subsequent SSF exchange is not free at all.

The second conversion exchange exposes the falseness of the claim that conversion is a free gift. Indeed, the second exchange is reciprocal and an onerous process that eventually demands much in return. If the conversion process culminates in an exchange of sacrifices as I am forwarding, then the payment for the benefits of the Pentecostal Made Pure Embrace that is maintained as a Safe Secure Future is exactly authentic conversion marked by rupture.

Because AG clergy and laity who initially compel converts with MPE anticipate and indeed continue to compel participants toward a second exchange, the free gift of participation is also exposed as being part of a larger and longer sort of reciprocity. More bluntly, the only way the blessing of God can be assured is to respond in authentic conversion and its demands. This process masks the reciprocation aspects of the economy or exchange (Bourdieu 1977) through a separation of time between the Made Pure Embrace and authentic conversion, as sometimes converts wait five or more years before they take baptism. The first order offering wrapped in free gift language leads to an adverse selection

in the sense that prospective converts are not fully informed upfront about the eventual cost of participation.

Elisha describes a paradox between compassion and accountability in a similar way with regard to tying help to the poor to a call to conversion. While activism and giving to the poor is on the one hand a free, or unconditional, gift, it is implemented in the context of an ideology (evangelicalism) that places obligations on gifts, namely, the recipients' acceptance of God's unconditional gift which can never be equivalently reciprocated. This then leaves the follower in a continued state of indebtedness to the divine (Elisha 2008).

Elisha captures the falseness of the practices of salvation as a free gift, describing the 'cosmic debt' into which followers enter (2008: 177) and argues further that competing ethics of condemning sin and stressing positive values through individual will and action exist within evangelicalism (2008). I also point to this in my discussion of paradox. Evangelicals constantly reconcile notions of sacrificial giving and values of personal responsibility and accountability. All of this takes place within a social structure in which givers and recipients occupy different levels of power (Elisha 2008).

In the AG exchange described above, the second order demands require every part of a convert's life even if the promised rewards are not realized, a sort of reversal of prosperity gospel logics. A particular message delivered by pastor Kapil at a Friday fasting and prayer meeting made this point clear. He told the crowd that more than one hour on a Sunday morning is required and contrasted the low commitments of Hinduism by saying 'Jesus' name is not a mantra' or a 'short cut' and 'Christians don't bribe to get jobs' referring to paying for Hindu prayers, their own prosperity gospel. Instead he is said, 'God's promise is sure' and there is 'no need to test God'. He then asked rhetorically, 'Why do we worship?… To get everything?... To receive pragmatic blessings?... To open doors?', 'No,

whatever I get, I worship'. He then concluded, that 'even in sickness, silence, temptation, poverty, hardships, I will continue to worship'.

I decided to ask Pastor Vinod about these competing themes and how converts are compelled by one set of logics around the MPE and then given another set of logics at the time of baptism. He fully embraced this as the proper ordering of the gospel presentation. He pointed out that Jesus' ministry itself mirrors this ordering; 'when he encountered the needy, sick, poor, and demon possessed, he met their physical needs. He offered unconditional love, acceptance, and hope to the broken and oppressed and, as his followers matured, he demanded high levels of commitment'. It is clear that the conversion exchanges operate in relationships of reciprocity, or an exchange for sacrifices. Their commodity potential (Appadurai 1996) is demonstrated in that converts make extraordinary sacrifices in order to enjoy the related social, physical, economic, and psychological benefits.

Conclusion

I have explored the second of two exchanges that I argue make up the conversion careers of AG converts in Delhi, including the demands prior to baptism, the baptism ritual, and the post-baptism experiences. Following their initial introduction and inclusion into the AG community, converts experience affective rituals that render AG teaching true and are benefited by socio-economic uplift. They also develop strong emotional and relational bonds and a growing dependency upon the pastor, and are compelled by social inclusion and embrace as well as themes of God's love, grace, provision, and the Holy Spirit's ability to meet the needs of the convert. However, over time, higher levels of commitment are demanded and, prior to conversion, converts must fully turn from Hinduism, worldliness, and sin, and commit time and resources. I have argued that these ordered paradoxical meanings

are used to compel and trap converts. I have explored these through the free gift analysis in the Indian context.

Chapter 8

Missionary Middlemen and the Commoditization of the Gospel

Introduction

Depending upon how one spends Sunday mornings, American missionaries are considered either an example of the repugnant other or a hero of the faith. An economic framework will be used to explore a global enterprise with an annual budget of over 200 million USD (155 million GBP),[73] all of which is supplied by donors in USA AG churches. As a former missionary to North India and, given that I maintained a working relationship with AGWM after my departure, I was familiar with the organization's leadership and various related networks. Although I personally knew only a few of the missionaries with whom I talked, I was aware of the experiences and the general discourse in which North Indian AG missionaries engage and the terminology and language they speak. The data that informs this section was based upon semi-structured interviews and unstructured discussions with missionaries. I spent time at missionary houses, training venues, and denominational headquarters in order to embed myself into the current milieu of missionary experience.

There continues to be a lack of research into missionary lives, beliefs, and practices (Brickell 2012; Vallikivi 2014; Beidelman 1974). Studies that do in fact address the missionary as the subject rely upon published and archival materials.[74] Knibbe's study of Nigerian missionaries in Europe (2011), Fer's 'youth with a mission in the pacific island' that explores YWAM's global culture (2016), Brahinsky (2013), and Hancock's (2014) study of short-term missionaries are examples of the few recent missionary as subject studies. The result is a continued reliance upon the ideals of the missionary sending body as reflected in

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[73] https://www.guidestar.org/profile/44-0577787

[74] Sjaak van der Geest and Jon P. Kirby have noted the absence of the missionary as a subject of ethnography in the African context (1991). My inability to find such studies indicates that this may be true of India as well.

organizational and denominational literature rather than the experiences, motivations, and meanings expressed by the missionary practitioners.[75]

Given the sparse anthropological literature with missionaries as the subject, my initial goal is to explore missionaries, their lived experience, and their discourse to develop a baseline description.

Forms of evangelical commodification have been observed in the American church. Bialecki (2008) points out the commodification of the church itself. One church, for instance, adopted a 'purposely simple, internet-friendly insignia created in consultation with a graphic designer' for a logo, and colour coordinated rented space reflecting the beach where the building was located (Bialecki 2008: 375). He noticed that branding extended from the outward appearance of the church to the values that the church held, for example, the value of community. An interview with the pastor of the church revealed that he felt Christianity was slowly 'becoming undone by its financial and commercial aspects' (Bialecki 2008: 375).

Bialecki observes dissonance between participants expressing financial need and pastors and other evangelical leaders teaching that participants should reject materialism and seeking financial success, which would be 'spiritually deadening' (2008: 374). This, again, contrasts with the multiple goods and services sold by churches themselves, including Christian books and music, as well as appeals for participants to financially support missionaries and other Christian and community service efforts (Bialecki 2008). Bialecki solves the discrepancy between the simultaneous need for and rejection of money by arguing that by using the spheres of exchange theory, this discrepancy is understood as a set of economic activities within hierarchical spheres of exchange (2008).

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[75] See Clifford 1982; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 1997; Meyer 1999; Douglas 2001; Keane 2007; Vallikivi 2014.

Anthropologists have also described the prosperity gospel as a gift economy, or non-market economy. Part of the reason for this is the spiritual aspects of gifts, such as seed offerings that are given, as well as the spiritual connections in which giving results (Haynes 2013; Lindhardt 2009). Encouraging giving, or seed offerings, is motivated both by charismatic leaders as well as the logic that gifts are for God, and that as a result of giving, participants enter into a reciprocal relationship with the divine (Haynes 2013). Coleman notes that sacrificial giving provides insight into the intention and agency of participants, which is both produced by and a result of ritual action (2011). Others have described prosperity gospel-related sacrificial giving as empowering to participants as they utilize giving as a means through which to achieve self-transformation (Premawardhana 2012). This kind of giving 'bind[s] the god by a contract' (Hubert and Mauss 1964: 66). Haynes argues that Pentecostals understand the meaning of seed offerings as both an exchange with God as well as the potential that giving creates positive relationships with spiritual leaders, such as pastors (2013).

I make three arguments with regard to missionaries. First, is although missionaries identify within three general functions, resource partner, compassion, and apostolic, their primary work is to raise funds by telling the stories of Indian converts. I will then describe three types of North Indian missionaries based upon how they self-describe their roles and discuss the benefits they gain from their work. Then, I discuss how missionaries use doctrine as the basis of their work and commoditize meanings in their fundraising efforts. I argue that missionaries bundle meanings together in their presentations to donors in exchange for support. I call these commoditized bundles Saved Soul Stories (SSS).

Second, I argue that the missionaries personally benefit from being effective fundraisers. Assembly of God missionaries, unlike other evangelical and mainline protestant churches who hire missionaries out of a general missions fund, operate in an individualistic,

entrepreneurial, and competitive system in which each missionary is responsible for raising the funds required for their missionary venture. Finally, I will argue that the ethics of commoditization and trading of convert stories is questionable.

AG Missiology

I will begin with a description of the missionary role from the perspective of the Assemblies of God, also known as their theology of mission or missiology. A strategic missiology was first introduced into AG literature in the 1920's in the writings of AG missionary Alice Luce. She was influenced by the work of Anglican missionary Roland Allan (1960) in his widely read book, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours, A Study of the Church in Four Provinces* that was first published in 1912. Luce assimilated his categories and values and thereby pentecostalized his ideas by theologizing that the power for successful 'witness' and for the relational dynamics necessary to 'plant' indigenous churches was provided by the Holy Spirit (McGee 2010: 168). In the 1920's, the AG governing body, The General Council, formally adopted Luce's base strategy. Melvin Hodges (2009) reformulated Luce and Allan's ideas in his 1950s[76] book, *The Indigenous Church*, arguing that AG missionaries should start churches that would quickly become self-governed, self-propagating, and self-supportive. These strategies were timely given the political realignments marked by independence movements and the demise of the colonial empire in post-war geopolitics (McGee 2010: 170). Although AG missiological scholarship has continued since Hodges, his simple pragmatic volume became the 'authoritative guide' and has remained useful throughout AG missionary dialogue (McGee 2010: 173).

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[76] Its most recent publishing was in 2009.

The central and most basic role of the missionary is to effectively communicate AG knowledge to lost peoples. While modern protestant missionaries generally allow for contextualized wrappings (but not for the modification of core meaning) (Bosch 1991: 448), the AG missionaries that I talked to are not yet fully committed or comfortable with an Indianized or contextualized theology that strays very far from their own interpretations. Some non-AG missiologists, like Bosch, embrace a generous multi-cultural 'meaning making' project that he argues was the point all along. He says, 'from the very beginning, the missionary message of the Christian church incarnated itself in the life and world of those who had embraced it' (Bosch 1991: 421). Rather than seeing variations of orthodox faith as heresy, the essential nature of faith itself is contextual. As 'all theology was influenced, if not determined, by the context in which it evolved, there never was a "pure" message, supracultural and suprahistorical' (Bosch 1991: 422). Yet the AG missionaries in North India, at least those with whom I talked, continue to understand essential AG doctrines as pure truth. Though some may agree that 'Christian faith never exists except as translated into culture' (Bosch 1991: 447), they continue to maintain that the core truths are the same for everyone. Some make allowances for various cultural practices (wearing a turban in the case of a Sikh or a thread in the case of Hindu), however believe that over time they will come to know the truth.

Perhaps this is the reason, or the result, that there is little formal training for AG missionaries on how to contextualize as part of their official denominational preparation. As I argued in Chapter Two, it is the Indian pastors who do the work of localizing the gospel. Some missionaries openly oppose contextualization efforts, while others attempt to incorporate Hindu symbols in their outreach and allow for some Hindu expressions in church services.

The majority would agree with Peter, a resident career missionary in Delhi. From his perspective, there are 'some advantages to contextualization strategies'. He believes that 'Delhites are more attracted to the modern and when Hindus convert, they want a strict break'. Then he said, 'look, God is bigger than symbols', agreeing that it is ok for converts to 'wear a turban or thread'. He took the view that 'over time, their work ethic, character, and view of people will change' and provided an example, 'like the way they beat their wives'. His obvious low view of Indian people aside, he concluded on a theological basis that it is impossible to 'hold Hindu values and be a Christian' and that 'they must change their values, but it's a long process'. This is because 'as long as God is in the vessel, he will do away with the old ways'.

AG missionaries in North India are universally committed to reaching the unreached through a soul saving prioritized mission, yet, they are not monolithic in their approaches or strategy. There are varying opinions between them as to the nature of their work. The differences are most clearly reflected in quotidian activities and how they understand their duties. In order to better understand how missionaries express their experiences, I now want to explore examples of the three types[77] of missionaries with according to their functions.

Three Types of Missionary

In categorizing three differentiating roles with which AG missionaries self-identify, I also historicize these roles by comparing them to classic AG theologies of mission and related debates. Given that I have found few descriptions in anthropological literature regarding missionary roles, I am limited in comparative material from other contexts. My goal will be to

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[77] As with all categories constructed by anthropologists, AG missionaries in North India do not always neatly conform to these types.

record these experiences and describe the roles of these missionaries in a way that perhaps will provide a baseline for other ethnographic studies.

Resource Partner

The first type, according to a senior Indian leader I interviewed, represents the majority of missionaries in India for several decades up to 2010. I term these missionaries Resource Partner missionaries. These missionaries believe that the most effective means of reaching the lost is relying upon Indian clergy and Indian national churches to be the frontline workers of evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. They generally engage by financing and assisting Indian church planters, church buildings, and ancillary activities through training and humanitarian institutions. They also take up supportive roles such as teaching at bible colleges, helping with technical skills for building projects, administration, or church polity. The affiliate partnership model has dominated AG missions in India with resource missionaries acting as entrepreneurial middlemen who fundraise and garner prayer support by communicating the needs of the Indian church and their successes to donors in USA churches who, in turn, fund projects in India. This type has enjoyed controlling many of the resources desired by Indian clergy. Peter, who I quoted above, is a good example.

Peter picked me up from the Delhi metro. He is a 58-year-old who lives in Delhi and has been working as a missionary for 14 years. He was driving his Speed the Light vehicle provided by the fundraising activities of youth groups from American AG donor churches, a late model SUV and a good match to the other vehicles in the parking area around his condo. Most AG missionaries who arrived prior to the 1980's lived in rural colonizer style compounds; typically walled fortresses with staff, chapels, and sometimes even a school. One AG compound that I visited in Uttar Pradesh was complete with ceiling fans attached to

elaborate pulley mechanisms that fed through a wall and attached to a bicycle operated by an Indian servant, who would peddle to keep the Sahibs cool inside. Today's missionary has moved on from the bicycle ceiling fan contraption and, instead, has traded rural gated compounds for urban gated condos, jeeps for SUVs, and local markets for modern malls complete with movie theatres, the Hard Rock Café, and any kind of clothing store one could think of.

As we entered Peter's condo, I met his *Ayah* (nanny/maid), and we took our seats in a large, marble floored, modern three-bedroom condo on the third floor. All of the missionaries in Delhi live in similar condos or flats, where they mingle with their neighbours, other expats, and upper middle-class Indians. This represents a very different social group from the chronically poor who make up the majority of AG converts. The missionaries all have a cover or some other identity that is often used to obtain an employment or business visa. So, to his neighbours he was known as, Peter the business consultant from Arizona. I had prepared a set of questions to tease out his background, his work, and his feelings about Hinduism.

He started by telling me about his education, a bachelor's degree in pastoral theology and a master's degree in Global Leadership as well as some courses in Muslim studies. He was sure that being a missionary was God's plan because of the 'amazing spiritual confirmations' that followed his initial decision after hearing another Indian missionary preach at his church. What was somewhat unique is that he waited to become a missionary for 20 years after first feeling called. It was for him a sort of second career after many years of working as a pastor in the USA.

He described his spiritual life as a relationship with God, who through the Holy Spirit, 'redeemed my bad experiences, guided me to truth, helped me in my prayers, and provided

discernment, insight, and knowledge'.

His strategic plan was to partner and work alongside local pastors and churches, helping them with their strategic plans, leadership development, teaching at the bible college, and assisting with construction projects. He admitted that he worked in English and had not learned Hindi. His role as a resource partner to existing AG Indian churches that I discuss in more detail below is a common function.

What was less common was that he also did 'personal evangelization with non-Christian businessmen' by 'educating and consulting the upper class.' He, like most missionaries, lived in a posh neighbourhood of Delhi. He motioned with his hands and explained this as 'reaching my neighbours with stories and testimonies so that they follow Jesus'. He concluded by quoting scripture, saying, 'I am all things to all people[78] so that some would be reached'. Then he said, 'with respect to culture and religion, I just tell them that Jesus is the answer, your soul will be at peace, freed from demons, and you will go to heaven'. However, he admitted the difficulties of not being able to develop open and honest relationships with prospective converts given that 'people in the community don't know my true identity'.

He continued speaking about Hinduism and said it had a 'circular' logic, that it was 'very sexual', that the gods were false and 'crafty', and involved demon worship. So, in terms of his own success at reaching Hindus, he said it is a process that takes at least two years for them to understand and have faith in 'Jesus as the true God'.

I then asked him about his funding, of which two thirds came from churches and the rest from individuals. He said the key is develop trust and to send reports. He was concerned about a growing trend of USA churches sending teams on 'short-term trips to

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[78] This is a quote from the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:22 discussing his own missionary work.

India' because they 'fund Indian pastors directly'. He said that funding Indian pastors directly was a 'kind of a reverse mission fundraising'. According to him, 'there is no accountability because donors live 10,000 miles away'. He also lamented that 'donors are more likely to support compassion ministries like anti-human trafficking' and because the 'national church is not into these type of works' that he does not do them and this puts him at a fundraising disadvantage.

Partnership strategy and resource missionaries like Peter point out the waning significance of USA missions and the strategic advantage of global south missionaries. Numbers alone bear this out, given that Assembly of God churches of the global south represent the vast majority of the movement's 67 million members while USA churches have a relatively small three million members (Ma and Ma 2010). They also argue that there are several advantages to having Indians do the bulk of church planting work; they are less costly to support, more naturally equipped, and perhaps more committed to long-term engagement in local communities than their missionary counterparts. Language, culture, and other local knowledge provide them with clear advantages over American counterparts at effective proselytizing and discipleship.

These missionaries argue that in countries like India where an affiliate AG national church has already been established, resourcing is the best use of a missionary's time and talent. An article in the AG periodical *The Evangel* echoed this view with a historical typology that casts early missionaries as 'pioneers', followed by a second-stage of 'spiritual parenting', leading to the current stage of 'spiritual partnering' where the role of AG missionaries is primarily to source global affiliates (Hurst 2006: 14 see also Hodges 2009: 14). We will see that others believe that missionaries should continue to pioneer, proselytizing those yet to be reached by an evangelical salvation message (Johnson 2009) even if a national church is already established.

There is an on-going question about how much financial partnership is prudent to maintain the goal of indigenous self-supportive churches. This has been an especially salient debate in India given that historically, Indian churches have been dependent upon their missionary colleagues. Some, like Peter, are cutting back. Speaking of local requests for funds, he believes 'they need to stand on their own' and was proud to admit 'I always say "no"'. This creates tension as Indian clergy have had to manage with reduced funding. Pastor Vinod talked to me about the new arrangement in contrast to 10 years prior, 'They (speaking of the missionaries) do their thing and we do our thing… they no longer do anything for us'. Every missionary that I interviewed, except one, quickly and enthusiastically responded 'yes' when asked if they adhered to the indigenous church principles. Their passionate responses may be related to the trend away from Resource Partner types and for these types to offer their skills instead of their dollars. In contrast, Indian pastors believe that the most important contribution that AG missionaries make is telling the Indian church story to American donors and then funding their church expansion mission. To Peter, however, these Indian colleagues see him 'only as an ATM machine'.

These dynamics are further blurred by the relational connections between missionaries and Indian denominational leaders that include friendships spanning, in some cases, decades. The result is a North Indian AG milieu of varying convictions and loyalties both committed to historical partnerships and relationships on the one hand and dually committed to emancipating the North Indian church in the ways that Hodges suggest. There is also a continued push to going it alone with evangelistic efforts into unreached regions of North India, although most agree that the partnership model of resource missionaries is a proven strategy. The desire of these missionaries to be valued for their other ministry assets may be one of multiple reasons that there is a trend toward the third missionary type, Apostolic Function Missionaries.

Compassion Type Missionaries

The Christian paradox[79] between eschatological soul saving and the incarnational Jesus who taught God's kingdom values for the poor and disenfranchised is seen throughout AG missiological writings. This paradox has normally been internalized in the AG tradition as a matter of priority. This long-standing tension is documented in an internal 1985 document that ranked AG missionary priorities. Here, 'acts of compassion' was listed fourth behind 'evangelism', 'building of indigenous churches' and 'training of national believers' (McGee 1986). Here, worldly social agendas are logically inferior to other worldly and more urgent concerns that are directly linked to AG theological history of millenarian expediency. Early missionaries, valuing the human soul and expecting a soon second coming of Jesus and therefore apocalyptic events, moved almost exclusively away from development and relief efforts (McGee 2010: 159).

Peter is a modern example of someone with these views. He contrasted the AG soul saving work with 'Catholics (who) do the social work'. He, not wanting to seem lacking compassion, I assume, told me that he 'supports kids to go to school', but then said with a shrug, 'the poor will be with you always'. [80] He instead focuses on the 'prime objective', which is 'to preach the good news and get souls saved'. He admitted that 'compassion is sometimes effective at reaching the lost and important to do even if it doesn't'. To him, this is like Jesus' 'parable of the seeds where you throw a lot of seed and eventually find some good ground'. Peter's view is like evangelical focused missions of the past who stood against the social gospel of liberal denominations (McGee 2010: 172).

Generally, Pentecostals' main priority remains evangelization, but they are also

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[79] Cannell (2006) in introduction of *The Anthropology of Christianity* outlines this paradox.
[80] This is a quote from Jesus from Matthew 26:11 as one justification to focus on soul saving as opposed to compassion ministry.

socially active (McClung 1990). This appears to be a trend on the rise, especially with regard to what donors in American churches prefer to fund. Elisha demonstrates how ministry to the poor is appealing to evangelicals who try to find meaning in their own lives (2004). In this way, givers rise beyond the normal market economy in which they live, moving away from economic rationality towards philanthropy (Elisha 2008).

Missionaries are attuned to these shifts and are motivated to serve because of their own philanthropic leanings. Judy, 31 at the time of our interview, is a good example of a compassion-focused missionary. I visited her during her field training in Jaipur, Rajasthan. Although she was a pastor's daughter, she said that her 'relationship' with God started in college. She wanted to be a missionary because she 'felt that there is a hole in the gospel and we need to have a Christian response to poverty'. Her particular passion came when 'God spoke' to her 'to help in the issue of (anti)-human trafficking'. She completed a faith based anti-trafficking training course called *Hands that Heal*. She told me that God gave her a 'heart for children in India who need more help' and said this path was in 'obedience to the bible' where 'love and witness' go hand and hand providing an 'open door'. Yet, she does not think 'it matters if it leads to conversion'.

She described her current work as part of a team in training that does 'children's ministry in the villages' where she told bible stories. Her business visa was to be in 'import-export'. She said she also helped older girls, over 16, who 'are currently prostitutes' through 'relational evangelism' taking them for dinner. She didn't 'preach to them… but mostly just encourages them'. She says she also did little things like giving 'lip gloss and shampoo to beggars and things like that… With women, we go to dinner'. She explained, 'I don't preach in church but sometimes teach in the bible college'. She explained her position as follows.

> 'On the social compassion side of the debates because I see a power in showing love. If you hang out and be with them and give them a safe place, they will

recognize that idolatry is a farce. I believe that the central message is that Jesus came to love, sacrifice, and he wants a relationship with us. He offers a new life to follow him and he provides divine healing and a hope of heaven where other gods don't'.

She said proudly, connecting her compassion work to the type of donors that support her, that between half and three quarters of her funds come from non-Christian sources whom she updates using Facebook.

Judy and others who work in compassion ministries universally echo a prioritization of soul saving. Judy's team leader stated the logic, 'what good is it if we rescue a girl from the brothel and she ends up going to hell?' This points to the steadfast otherworldly commitment of AG missionaries and donors.

AG missionaries display co-present priorities of increasing human wellbeing and assuring eternal salvation. This is seen in a different approach that places the compassion mandate onto the indigenous church. Alan Johnson, anthropologist and AG missionary to Thailand, marks the pendulum swinging back toward prioritizing evangelism and church planting. He rejects missionary institutional approaches to social needs that see 'money as a single vector answer' and calls for a relational approach (Johnson 2007: 23). His nuanced recommendations are similar to Hodges' middle position arguing that the 'aphorism "nationals can do things better" needs to be applied to humanitarian concerns as well' (Johnson 2007: 26). He points to the potential of the nearly 300,000 AG churches to care for 'weak, poor, widows, aged, exploited, those suffering from HIV/AIDS, drought, famine, victims of war and violence' (Johnson 2007: 26).

As we have seen, historically, the AG has prioritized evangelism including the 'building of indigenous churches', and 'training of national believers' over 'acts of compassion' (McGee 1986: 168). The worldly social agendas of the flesh have been

subjugated to the other worldly more urgent concerns of the spirit linked to its theological history of millenarian expediency. They, like other evangelical missions, stood against the social gospel of liberal denominations (McGee 2010: 172).

However, later missionaries have shifted toward kingdom of God theologies that legitimize social justice programs (Petersen 1996; Satyavrata 1999). Many missionaries believe that their donors value more tangible outcomes and are more likely to give to protect vulnerable at-risk children than they are to fund a bible college or pay for a church building. This debate remains unsettled as demonstrated by Johnson who returns to a middle position and understands social work to be the responsibility of the local church rather than missionaries (Hodges 2009; Johnson 2009). Although Pentecostals continue to prioritize evangelization, they are also socially active (McClung 1990), and the legitimate role of the missionary continues to be an open debate. Debates over the appropriate role of missionaries with regard to developing, working with or funding schools, orphanages, hospitals, and the like continue to be unsettled. Those focused on unreached people groups (UPGs) value the eternal destination of lost Indians over earthly matters of injustice, poverty, and physical suffering. The result is again a mixture of convictions and roles brought together in relational dynamics that are simultaneously supportive and in conflict.

Apostolic Function Type Missionaries

According to the senior regional AGWM leader, the changing strategy for India is to grandfather out the Resource Partner Missionaries and transition all personnel toward the third type, Apostolic Function Missionaries who will return to pioneering mission. As previously noted, AG missiologist Alan Johnson defines apostolic function as 'a focus on the apostolic task of preaching the gospel where it has not been heard, planting the church

where it does not exist, and leading people to the obedience of faith so that they will express Jesus Christ in their social worlds and participate in God's global mission' (Johnson 2007: 11). He also calls for a focused evangelism that prioritizes regions and countries where sociocultural distancing has prevented a 'culturally relevant indigenous church capable of reaching its own people' (Johnson 2007: 14). His view is that the pioneering stage continues and at least some of the AG missionary force should engage the unreached and proselytize them directly.

Unreached areas are considered difficult fields where the church is persecuted. India is considered a persecuted church and the Apostolic Function Missionaries almost always emphasize the difficulty of their work and the possibility of their own martyrdom. Elisha observes the tendency for evangelicals in the United States to liken themselves with Christians in countries in which churches are oppressed. Although stories of oppression often evoke grief, these stories portray sacrifice and persecution as an opportunity to become closer to God (Elisha 2016).

In his study of the Voice of the Martyrs (VOM) conference, which recruits missions-oriented evangelicals to become missionaries, Elisha shows how the use of martyrological media facilitates religious mediation, or the generation and transformation of relationships and construction of social ideals from the material world in which humans operate (2016). Elisha observes that the 'persecuted church' is 'a domain of sanctification, of intensified and authenticated devotions enacted through forms of religious mediation with martyrological narratives at their core' (2016: 8). It is, therefore, more than just a social or political movement. Martyrdom is, as Elisha describes it, 'not confined to bygone eras of church history, nor is it unique to distant conflict zones in Africa or the Middle East. Its currency is universal, its urgency timeless' (2016: 8).

Even though there is an AG indigenous church capable and willing to reach out, AGWM leadership has decided to return to the pioneer mission. One leader told me that 'everyone going forward will be placed in a church planting team'. Church planting teams normally consist of newer missionaries placed with veteran leaders who set the vision by targeting and strategizing for particular unreached populations. These teams directly engage the lost through a variety of methods. Although the rhetoric suggests that the AG is solidly committed to this type, only a few teams currently exist in North India and significant results of their efforts are not apparent. Instead, team leaders report to me that only a couple of small home fellowships have been established thus far. These teams often hire Indian bible college graduates or other local workers to assist them in their work and, at times, partner with existing AG churches. This would seem necessary as few USA missionaries have strong enough language skills to go it alone.

Barry, a 52-year-old male living on the suburbs of Delhi who has served AGWM for 26 years, is a proficient Hindi speaker. He 'did not go to church growing up but was baptized in a Catholic church' and 'met God' while serving in the military. He described being motivated to missions after having a 'spiritual experience where I felt motivated by the lostness and poverty of many people in the world'. In the AG there is no higher form of character celebrated that making the commitment to become a foreign missionary.

So, he committed hoping for an 'all-in missionary experience'. He is currently the leader responsible to transition missionary personnel toward direct engagement with Hindus. The goal is to plant churches by working in teams and 'to see the number of AG missionaries in India rise to 500 spread over 33 cities in North India with functional church planting teams who are training and organized in three basecamps'. Throughout our talk he continued to mix in poker and trekking metaphors. I asked how he intended to accomplish his church planting goals. He said he believed that this would be the result of Hindus

'experience(ing) power encounters'. This is a reference to a spiritual battle when Hindus are presented with the 'central message of the gospel that Jesus loves all mankind and promises eternal life'. Although he admitted the process is 'messy', he advocated for 'cultural redemption' and 'whatever needs to be done in order to get them to be a follower of Jesus, say the sinner's prayer, and read scripture'.

We talked about the move away from missionaries functioning as Resource Partners and he said they were negotiating and discussing their future 'relationship with the national church' and whether or not to work together with them in their team approach. He also said that he 'strongly believes in a holistic approach where both social and spiritual needs are addressed' but that his 'only involvement with compassion ministry is personal giving' because he believes 'that it should be the local church's responsibility'.

The move toward direct engagement evangelism reflects the internal values of missionaries and the donors who support them. However, there is little evidence of these missionaries being the true producers of converts. From the perspective of the Indian clergy that I talked to, missionaries' real contribution is their ability to provide funding by telling stories of church growth and need. Not only does it appear that missionaries are not currently effective at directly cultivating converts even though some current missionaries view their predecessors as the pioneers of the Pentecostal movement in India, this view is historically questionable. Indeed, many Pentecostal movements predate the USA missionary effort. In India, Pentecostal revivals are reported in 1860 (McGee 2010: 39) while the AG denomination was not founded there for another 50 years. Pentecostalism in general has had multiple beginnings and lacks a distinguishable founder (Wilson 1999: 91) with multiple autonomous movements existing as parallel phenomena without clear lines of connection other than a shared ritual experience that has been captured in a Pentecostal theology.

Wilson, an AG church historian, says that these parallel non-western movements have 'their own analogous, cognate forms (including their own founders, origins, and subcultures), but in a variety of settings, in different ways with their own spiritual achievements. If they exhibit similar, if not identical Pentecostal features, it is notable that they have never had more than the most tenuous ties to the North American institutions' (Wilson 1999: 109). So, although AG USA claims these affiliated groups as if they were the result of a missionary effort, it is clear that such centring is fallacious. For example, one prominent leader credits the start of the Delhi AG church that he now leads to a small missionary-led gathering from the 1970's. South Indians who came to the North as church planters founded the other early churches. Although the growth of the AG in Delhi is accredited to various people, those who I asked were by no means unified in their answers, some seeing South Indians to be credited, and others the missionaries.

It is nevertheless clear that current growth and convert production is the result of Indian laity and Indian church leaders. Although missionaries take roles of support, compassion, and apostolic function and are now increasingly organized into church planting teams, from what I heard and observed, it is overwhelmingly the Indians who produce converts. Likewise, as the current church planting team may see themselves as new pioneers, they continue to rely upon local Pentecostal workers to get the job done.

Selling Saved Soul Stories

All types of AG missionaries are fundraisers. AG missionaries are given furlough years, on average one for every three years they spend on the field. Missionaries that are more effective communicators generally receive more opportunities and more time to share. The following are examples from missionary sermons at ritual events in the USA. Nearly every

AG church across the USA holds a missions Sunday at least once per year. These missions emphasis ritual gatherings held in donor churches are a key place where the most important aspects of lived AG knowledge are codified. Missionaries either present their stories of success and struggle in a short (three to 15 minute) window before the church's pastor delivers the main sermon, or they preach the entire sermon. These are the opportunities for missionaries to tell their stories and raise funds for their ventures. Donors and missionaries share meanings and create values based upon how they appropriate knowledge from AG doctrine.

First, it is important to delineate exactly what I mean by Saved Soul Stories given that my contention is that SSS are the commodities being produced in the AG missionary effort. Here, I will show how the AG truths outlined above are bundled together and commoditized around the concept of salvation. The bundle of meanings that missionaries sell can therefore be summarized as, God loves and sent Jesus; the need to accept Jesus as one's personal saviour; the need to completely leave Hinduism; and the promise of peace, healing, purpose on the earth, and eternal life in Heaven for Christians. AG SSS are conversion stories and evidence of rupture from time and space, but often also include wider elements including emancipations from poverty, demonic possession, addictions, exploitations, and earthly oppressions. I argue that these are added value elements to the eternal salvation story that actually retain the highest value. As stories, they may be embellished or even fabricated. Nevertheless, they are the commodity of the global AG missionary economic commodity chain.

The middle-aged missionary hero who was recognized as a senior leader on the field with nearly 20 years of experience was introduced as such to the rousing applause of the crowd. I will call him Jeffery. I know him personally and have heard him speak on multiple occasions with similar themes. It was 2015 in a church of around 500 in the southern part of

the USA, the bible belt. The pastor who introduced the guest almost burst with a sense of awe and respect and took time to express just how much this missionary had impacted his life and the world. This was one of the shining stars of AG North India, 'he is a modern-day Apostle Paul' says the pastor, as he gave him a hug and handed him the microphone.

The missionary feigned humility and began his talk in a passionate and sincere tone. His inflections at times were almost pained, and at other times were filled with laughter to bring his audience in.

'Today is Missions Sunday… where we go after the heart of God. We have hope because of missions, because the early church did not sit back but took the good news to the world and put their own lives in danger. 10 of Jesus' disciples died and were martyred preaching the gospel in other lands.'

'My son was diagnosed with autism and needed special attention… if he gets the attention he needs he will be fine, but where we were going there are no special training for autistic children and no special programs. The doctors told us that if we take our son it would be child abuse. But we prayed and told God that because he was willing to send his son to die that children are not an excuse and we believe you [God] are in this and we went anyways. After two years my wife was at the end of her rope. She said I can't do this… she would come home and cry herself to sleep. I prayed again and said I'm not going to disobey you. Please let me know that we are in the right place because we don't want to suffer in vain. If it's you, let us know. Then I received a letter from a couple because the Lord spoke to them to come and serve with us. She said that she was in special education and had been teaching autistic children. Now my son has his own teacher for the past two years.'

'We have so many opportunities to hear the gospel, but there are people 80 years old who have never heard. But there are two 2 billion that have never heard the gospel, there is not a church pastor or radio TV station. We have some missionaries going to a closed nation with only two believers in the entire nation. If they are caught they will be imprisoned or killed. Are they valuable enough to put my life on the line? There are 50 missionaries in a training school in Cairo, 50 preparing to go to the most difficult places. Lining up today may cost me my life, but somebody has to go and tell them.'

'My family served for 20 years in North India walking from village to village, preaching the gospel [to] thousands of villages and hundreds of thousands of lost people. Now we have two bible schools and over 200 churches.'

'Within one year, first God brought people and 15 were baptized then the next year, 37 baptized, 500 baptized, now 1,000 people and churches in 50 villages.'

'When you give up the things that are important in your life for the lost, God will never leave you to shame. We must release the things that we love. If missionaries are

willing to give their lives we must be willing to sacrifice our resources.'

As the sermon came to its climax, Jeffery prayed and reiterated the main points: the great task of reaching the world, the sacrifice required, the stories of God's power as evidenced by the fruit of the missionary's work, and the need to commit our lives and respond by going, praying for missionaries, or giving. The congregation was given an opportunity to participate in the effort and invest into the work of reaching the world. This normally occurs at the end of the sermon when the emotional appeal is still fresh. The pastor comes to the front and takes a special offering for the missionary. This is an example of a missionary selling SSS and how AG knowledge is turned into a commodity and traded for the capitalization of the missionary effort.

Jeffrey is one of two current AG missionaries in India that are regarded by both their colleagues and Indian clergy as especially effective fundraisers. I was able to find videos of them delivering Sunday sermons to USA donor churches. In analyzing the messages of high producers or fundraisers, a clear pattern with five elements emerges. These elements consist of examples of (1) the missionaries' own commitments or sacrifices, (2) difficulties in getting converts, (3) list of the missionaries' accomplishments with regard to conversions, (4) emotional compassion and supernatural intervention, and (5) a cosmological logic to giving. These elements are important to effectively sell Saved Soul Stories.

First, emotional force toward adding value and consumerism is achieved in statements about the missionaries' own high commitment. The following example is from a well-travelled senior missionary leader and speaker that I am calling Kyle. Kyle's 40 plus year fundraising career is one of the most effective and prolific in the history of AG missions in India. This excerpt serves to illustrate the element of missionary commitment:

'I said to God, let me go where it's never been preached, let me plant where there has never been a church plant. Plant the cross where it has never been planted, 41 years… I have given my life and my money. My first faith promise was $10 (7.7 GBP) per month then $25 (19 GBP) per week, $1,200 (930 GBP) per year… Told God I would not get married for 13 years, so for 13 years I gave every minute and every penny.'

Converting the unreached is of special importance in India, which statistically has the highest number of people considered yet to be reached by missionaries, especially in the north. It is the rarity and challenge of getting SSS from unreached people groups that is appealing. Jeffery's message described the injustice that while in America the gospel is available, in the unreached world, it is rare. Kyle's ministry rescues girls from the sex trafficking industry and brings them to conversion. His tactic is to point out the sheer size of the challenge.

'Girls are a liability in India. A million little girls aborted every year… one million suffocated at birth, their life snuffed out. 800 million in poverty. One million little girls sold into sex trafficking. 20 years ago, we started Teen Challenge in Bombay, 100k girls in brothels, raped, beaten, broken, some 12, 13 years of age. 100 girls gave their hearts to Christ but could not leave, gave us 37 girls and opened home of hope, have opened 12 homes. Project Rescue minister[s] to 12,000 girls and is ministering to their lives planting churches in the red-light district… lighthouse in the heart of hell… halleluiah.'

The next compelling sales element is for the missionary to demonstrate their own effectiveness and to give donors/consumers proof that investing in their work will pay benefits. In Jeffery's sermon, he includes a long list of accomplishments in terms of numbers of saved souls. Kyle does the same:

'After 41 years we now have 8,000 AG churches in India… in one church, 45,000 people in Madras that your church has invested in… 1,000 have been started this year. Many are the result of this church who has given over 1,000 dollars. This money has gone to rescue souls and girls from forced prostitution… you have made a difference and because you gave, 1,000 churches have been started and 12,000 girls touched.'

The next element of effective SSS are emotional accounts that describe supernatural intervention. These demonstrate God's power at work through the ministry of the missionary as well as relying upon the human compassion of the audience to great effect.

'A seven-year-old girl's mother, a prostitute, died and [she] did not know who her father was. Her arms and legs were as big as my finger. The doctor said she will not live, but she had given her heart to Jesus. Now she is a beautiful Christian. I became her adopted uncle. When it came time for me to leave (on furlough from India) I held her in my arms and she felt like a feather, so frail you hardly knew you were holding a living child in your arms. I said, 'honey, uncle is going to go back to America. I'll be back in a few weeks'. She looked at me with her big dark eyes and said, 'I won't be here when you come back'. She knew she was dying. Something broke inside of me… tears were running down my face. She reached out and brushed the tears from my face and preached the greatest sermon that I have ever heard. She said, 'don't worry about me uncle, I've got Jesus and he is all I need'. She never knew her father and now mother were dead, born in a brothel, never had nobody but now she had Jesus. I hugged her and sat with her on the floor. I was still crying. God, there are a million little kids that need your help, but there is one girl that has no future, but she said that she had Jesus and he is all that I need. Every church I went to I shared her story and called her name. Thousands of people prayed for her, and I wish I had more faith. I was embarrassed and went back to India, stepped out of the airplane and a crowd had come to greet me. A little girl broke loose from that crowd and came running (now crying visibly) screaming 'uncle, uncle' and I swept her up in my arms and said the stupidest thing I ever said: 'honey what are you doing here?' I did not have any faith. 'Uncle, Jesus has healed me and I am completely normal and Jesus has given me a new momma and a new daddy… I have been adopted by a Christian family and uncle I've got a daddy for the first time in my life'. She had gained 25 pounds. She was no longer an orphan, no longer dying, because God had stretched out his hand.'

The final element now appeals to the logic side of the listeners and provides both a theological and cosmological logic for giving. Jeffery pointed to his own sacrifice for God's work, and Kyle described a wise investment:

Whatever we have God flows through it… my life, my money, my wife, caring for my children, my dreams, my house… mine, mine… but nothing is ours. We are the stewards of God's investment… our money is a trust from God, all are his not ours. Hundreds of people come to Christ in my meetings. If we don't go they will die and go to hell. Marriage, supper of the lamb, inviting 1 million girls to the door. Welcome to the father's house… you invested… plant churches in red light districts.'

These examples demonstrate how missionaries sell SSS and how they promote themselves as altruistic heroes of the faith while asking for donations to reach lost people who are destined for hell. My argument is that AG actors bundle meanings around the conversion process and commoditize these meanings. Missionaries, the supporting denominational structure, the Assemblies of God World Missions institution, and AG donor churches all bundle the following cosmological beliefs into stories by the following logics: non-Christians are lost and going to hell; Christians should evangelize and convert the lost so that they will go to heaven instead of hell; and you should give because there is no greater investment than eternal life and you will be rewarded. These stories also normally have added value elements related to the difficulty or rarity of the conversion. These include: missionaries are heroic figures who sacrifice to proselytize the lost; when Indians convert, it is incredibly valuable and heaven rejoices; Hindu converts are from Unreached People Groups and are rare; and converts are poor, uneducated, trafficked, without health care, and generally oppressed.

Now I will examine the rewards that missionaries personally realize for their work and expose possible motivations of missionaries as grounded in profit-maximizing strategies that bring them personal benefits by responding to market demands. The primary argument of the remainder of this chapter is that the SSS commodity network motivates and monetizes a proselytizing effort that rewards individual actors with increasing budgets and social status based upon their ability to find and tell stories of saved souls.

Benefits of Trading In Saved Soul Stories

Examining missionary messages in the context of a profit-maximizing strategy, we can see at least a few possibilities beyond reaching the lost for what motivates missionary service

and becoming an effective SSS tradesman. The following information comes primarily from my personal experience as a missionary, based in mostly autobiographical evidence.

First, and most straightforwardly, missionaries are rewarded financially. It is clear that the central point of donor church engagement is fundraising. Financial benefits are not apparent on the surface since missionary salaries do not increase directly from SSS effectiveness or commission, however, there is a correlation between effective production and trade of SSS and the kind of lifestyle a missionary can lead if they so desire. Some would rather reap higher social and/or cosmological benefits by adding to their heroic personas and building a reputation of frugality as a sort of vow of poverty. Yet for most, there are visible financial benefits to those who are most effective at fundraising.

First, we should restate that each AG missionary is an independent operation. They do not raise funds for AG missions in general (although they do contribute five per cent of their total income to the overall administration), but, rather, they raise funds for an account designated for their personal living expenses, travel, salaries, and work. Funds are banked at denominational headquarters, salaries are set by policy with only minimal differences for seniority, and travel expenses must be approved by the head missionary on the field, but all excess funds are listed in the missionaries' personal account ledgers under the code '00'. The 'double oh', as missionaries refer to it, is a large part of collegiate conversations. A healthy balance in one's (00) indicates successful fundraising abilities, a source of pride. These (00) budgets can be spent on both ministry (supporting Indian churches, compassion efforts, bible colleges) and living expenses such as rent, maids, gardeners, childcare workers, and travel. Missionary budgets range from basic but comfortable, 3,500 USD (2,700 GBP) per month, to over 10,000 USD (7,700 GBP) per month. Some (00) balances are in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. For those with healthy (00)'s, a missionary lifestyle can resemble that of the upper class. Many missionaries live in posh

neighbourhoods, have household staff including cooks and maids, and drive nice vehicles. They can afford to travel every year to tourist locations normally tied to various denominational meetings or special trainings held at four- and five-star resorts.

None of the missionaries I talked to related SSS to lifestyle benefits as this would be considered an illegitimate motivator for increased production or the selling of the stories of their mission. They point to love for the lost and obedience to God as the reasons for missionary service. Using the spheres of exchange theory, Bialecki observes conflicts that arise between values that are placed on wealth and materialism and values from American charismatic movements. Vineyard participants understood that money is something that should be carefully considered in order to continue as a movement, while not succumbing to materialistic values. Bialecki argues that not only does this present contradiction between materialism and anti-material values, but it also results in a form of hypocrisy (2008). Missionaries share these conflicting attitudes towards wealth. SSS trade has economic benefits that may, at least partly, account for the roles that missionaries choose (compassion and apostolic function missionaries have added value benefits) and how missionaries shape SSS narratives and market these to donor churches.

The second benefit or reward for SSS producers and traders is symbolic or social benefits. Jeffery shaped his stories around the hardship that he faced and his willingness to sacrifice for the cause. In the next chapter, we will again see that marketing of the denominational missionary headquarters portrays missionaries in altruistic and militant themes. They are both the conquering agents, described by terminology such as 'boots on the ground', and altruistic, portrayed by messages such as 'packing their coffins'. I argue that these themes also increase the value of SSS as there is a strong correlation between more socially and religiously closed and resistant contexts and lower numbers of Christians. As such, Muslim and Hindu contexts are marketed as challenging and souls, or conversions,

as rare goods because of the danger or risk involved in the missionary effort to these areas. A consistent part of the marketing is their willingness to sacrifice and risk their lives in order to reach the lost in resistant contexts. This marketing also portrays missionaries as sort of military-like heroes of the faith. The result among donor communities who consume SSS is veneration of the missionary. Missionaries are described on USA church websites as heroes and legends. They are introduced as men of God and true men of obedience, given seats of honour, and recognized in social gatherings as if it is a privilege to be in their presence. These clear social benefits from SSS trading may also be part of what accounts for a sustained AG mission drive a century after its formation.

The final benefits, and perhaps the only ones understood by missionaries themselves to be legitimate, are eschatological cosmological rewards that will be received after death, specifically in the afterlife in heaven. AG participants believe that God is interested in converting the world to Christianity and will handsomely reward those who join the cause. Beyond the streets of gold, feasts, and mansions, heavenly rewards are thought to also include converts themselves. This is a sort of projection of cosmological social benefit in which those who have gratefully escaped hell will be the missionaries and donors' thankful neighbours in heaven.

Exchange Moralities

In this section, I analyze the exchange of Saved Soul Stories described above through the ethical lenses of Graeber (2011) and Sandel (1998). My first thought was that Graeber's 'communism' (2011) perfectly captures the nature of SSS in that no one in a congregation is required to give and there is an expectation that those with greater means will write bigger checks. However, 'communism' doesn't play out in real life scenarios (Graeber 2011). Over

time, continual unequal exchange lead to unequal social relations towards hierarchy. This is because missionaries maintain a morally higher ground. Compassionate giving creates vertical relationships and a necessarily unequal relational dynamic. This occurs when the giver controls the terms of the exchange and implies difference in 'wisdom and foresight' (Elisha 2008: 177).

Elisha uses Bourdieu to show that evangelicals not only 'misrecognize interested giving as disinterested', but their actions are shaped by multiple 'moral ambitions' which create an understanding of charity as both conditional and unconditional (2008). This is because in organized philanthropy, the 'givers' assume moral superiority over recipients, which justifies their social and spiritual power (Blau 1964). So, charitable giving can reinforce the dominance of the wealthy, even when motivated by the desire to give to others (Odendahl 1990).

I argue the reverse because regardless of how much donors give[81] or lavish praise upon the missionary, they can really never give enough to account for the eternal rescue of a lost and suffering soul and the eternal rewards that they receive. The only moral equivalent would be to literally sell all they have to give to poor lost souls. Unequal exchange, such as that produced in a money-for-souls exchange, always leads to hierarchy. The one who has more ability to give, in this case missionaries, always emerges above the one who is less able. Over time, contributions of equal partners are expected to be reciprocal or result unequal exchange.

For the same reason (unequal values), Graeber's 'exchange' also does not apply to

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[81] Perhaps it is by demarcations and separations where a missionary gift, just as a tithe, carries different meaning so that donors are able to at once give without guilt and within a separated set of conventions than normal market forces would dictate. As Zelizer points out in *The Social Meaning of Money* (1994), people earmark money for particular reasons, sometimes away from optimization and according to other social meanings and economies of value.

SSS for money exchange. Rather, missionaries selling saved souls are most like Graeber's third category in which hierarchical relationships are driven by a logic of 'precedent' (Graeber 2011). Money for souls, however, is an unequal exchange morality built on the limits of altruism. So, the relationship is mediated by an on-going sense of debt and guilt. As an example, over the years of my missionary career, I found that whenever I visited a large or well-appointed home of a wealthy congregant in the USA, they would take time to explain the expenditure on their house by saying something like, 'we needed the space to run our small group bible study'. They assumed I might be calculating just how many souls might be reached if they had not built such a large house and given more in the missionary offering. So, because value is determined by a judgment about the commodity (eternity of a soul), which is not somehow inherent in the commodity (the story itself), missionaries have the moral upper hand (Simmel 1978). They are giving something of eternal value to congregants in exchange for financial donations. Whether it is 300 dollars to rescue a prostitute, 5,000 to plant a church, or 100,000 to save 100,000 souls, the exchange is always unequal and always places the missionary on higher moral ground.

Missionaries do, however, provide a valuable service that they often point out to American churchgoers and pastors: the opportunity to participate in the great commission through just giving money. Commonly taught from AG pulpits is an explanation of the division of labour where the one who goes to the field (missionary) and the one who gives or sends (the donor) share in the blessings or heavenly rewards. This may be a way of bringing some equality into the relationship through market principles, however, the missionary still monopolizes the production of SSS, and, therefore, maintains a higher ground and an unequal exchange. The missionary class is therefore created by virtue of its social superiority and ability to offer something that is truly priceless, eternal life saved and the eternal rewards promised to the donor.

Corruption?

In *What Money Can't Buy, The Moral Limits of Markets* (1998), Sandel questions the ethical basis of certain commodification as corruption. To explore the issue of corruption in the commoditization of souls saved, we must first assume that SSS are genuine. In this sense, SSS represent, as Kyle claimed, hundreds of thousands of authentic conversions to Christianity as a result of the financial investment of the southern church.[82]

Should missionaries profit off the struggles of the chronically poor who find hope by converting into AG churches? And, similarly, is the conversion act itself corrupted by the story told about it?[83] Profit could perhaps be justified by weighing the new life of a convert against the old life. On this scale, AG participants could argue that the capitalization of the missionary effort is a good thing because it results in socio-economic uplift and eternal life, yet it also results in the social ostracizing of converts at the hands of Hindu families and communities that react against conversion. It is an open question if these atrocities are more accurately laid at the feet of those who restrict religious freedom and drive a wedge between communities for political advantage. Bauman argues that Pentecostalism is more objectionable than other Christian expressions (2017) and that at least part of the reason is related to the transnational flows of money and missionaries (2015). Regardless of who is at fault for such persecutions, it is clear that missionaries, more than any other actor, benefit from telling conversion stories.

Moreover, given that conversion is a personal act of intimacy, does selling a conversion story corrupt a process that is personal, sacrificial, and intimate? The sharing of

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[82] For a variety of reasons this claim is likely dubious which brings up the matter of fungibility of donations which I discuss in chapter three.

[83] This is a different argument from Sandel's ethical lens of coercion in which the Hindu political right accuses missionaries of inducing or paying for conversions. I found no evidence of pastors or missionaries offering money for conversion, since they agree this would be immoral and would corrupt the authenticity of the conversion.

the story for profit itself corrupts the act. At the minimum, we can conclude that commodification and selling of SSS is a morally questionable practice and may corrupt a personal, intimate act of devotion.

Conclusion

I have described AG missionaries, their values, and their actions on the ground in India and defined three types of missionaries including those who partner with the Indian AG, those who work with a compassion or humanitarian focus, and those who increasingly self-produce Indian converts. SSS is exchanged between missionaries who hold a superior moral position and donors who make decisions in what might be called economies of guilt or economies of altruism and receive cosmological rewards (the knowledge of a saved soul) and sometimes social rewards (the high esteem of a pastor or fellow congregants) in exchange for their capitalization of the missionary process. I have also explored the morality that grounds the exchange and questioned the morality of the commoditization of conversion.

Chapter 9

Assemblies of God and the Global Trade of Saved Soul Stories

Missionary Memory Circa 1998

The room was full of middle-aged white men in business casual garb. They were sitting around tables and waiting for the various presentations. I was going through my notes in my mind. 'My stories are more impressive than theirs', I thought as I continued rehearsing how to spark the emotional response needed to make the sale. It was among a group of 10 or so others. I was presenting third and feeling nervous; after all, I had competition. Speaking well to the gatekeepers and succeeding with this presentation would open the door to sell my goods to their people. It was a guaranteed sale of at least 1,000 dollars, sometimes as high as 25,000 or more. To get the opportunity to tell my stories and feature my product to the actual buyers, I had to first convince the men in front of me.

I carried business cards with my family's photo. Having an attractive wife and cute children always seemed to give me an advantage with the gatekeepers. My brochures were strewn across the tables. The marketing was the finest available with professionally arranged fonts, texts, and photos. Some of us had table displays with further information and, in order to draw the gatekeepers in for a conversation, we gave away free pens, candy, or peanut butter cups. But it was the verbal presentation, we all knew, that was the secret to landing day two.

The first presenter bombed. The crowd was tough… bored and ready for dinner. The second presenter came equipped with a gimmick. He held in his hands several spoons using them as a sort of metaphor attempting to draw the attention of the listeners. He was more effective in that at least they listened to him and he could be remembered as the
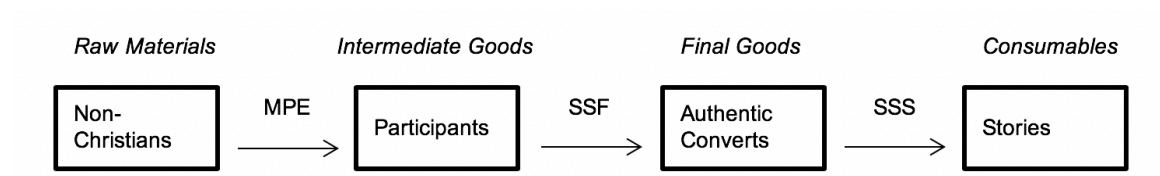
spoon guy… a novelty. Now my turn. I smiled, took the microphone, and immediately put on passion. I had discovered that novelty, or humour, were better than boring statistics, but not as effective as a passion-filled story that demonstrated my product's superiority. They remembered stories especially if delivered with sincere emotion. I finished, they clapped, and, six presentations later, it was hand shaking time and ensuring that each had my card. This is where individual charisma could make the difference. They, I had discovered, want to align themselves with success too. Confident and humorous banter can be the final piece that moves them from interest to signing on the bottom line.

I turned, and in front of me was a fellow presenter. He was visibly upset and spoke with sadness and frustration. 'We are going to quit', he said. 'It is no use, everywhere I turn you have already taken all the money'. I was unsure how to respond. I smiled and acted as if he was complimenting me and then quickly moved on to find another gatekeeper. But inside, his words stung. For he was not exactly my competition, and the occasion was not an opportunity to sell condos or sprockets, but a gathering of AG pastors at their regional meeting to hear the presentations of missionaries. The exposure enabled them to decide who they wanted to invite to speak at their churches or to support with their missions budgets. My friend was a much less compelling bible college teacher working in a Latin American country where the church was already firmly established. I was a church planter in India, the least statistically reached of all countries in the world, going to the darkness of the north where false religions and danger abound. Here, a saved soul is difficult to produce, a risky venture with few rewards, but I was successful and armed with stories to prove it.

The Assemblies of God effort is global capitalism in Jesus' name. It is driven by entrepreneurial spirit and obsessed with growth. In this chapter, I will describe how AG networks accommodate and imitate the neo-liberal structuring of social institutions toward marketization in global trade networks (Jennings 2016) by exploring AG missionary

engagement and the networks, relationships, connections, and exchanges between social actors across the field sites. I employ commodity and value chain analysis to identify the flows of saved soul stories (SSS) that are converts' stories as a result of the made pure embrace (MPE) and safe secure future (SSF) conversion exchanges. Figure 9.1 demonstrates the flows that we have identified. Flows are maintained through the relational exchanges between donors, missionaries, and Indian clergy who transform raw goods into consumable goods.

Figure 3: Flow of Goods

Raw Materials		*Intermediate Goods*		*Final Goods*		*Consumables*
Non-Christians	MPE →	Participants	SSF →	Authentic Converts	SSS →	Stories

Pentecostalism has been described as 'intrinsically missiological' (McClung 1999: 32), and the Assemblies of God certainly is a demonstration of this claim. Since its inception in 1914 in Hot Spring Arkansas, USA, the focus has been worldwide evangelism. The only reason many of the founding members were willing to organize at all was a desire to be more effective in world missions (McGee 1986). As part of the Pentecostal global phenomena, the AG has seen remarkable worldwide expansion into over 150 countries, 350,000 churches, claiming nearly 70 million adherents (Assemblies of God 2017). This growth is significant considering the AG had 23,290,000 adherents in 1986 and only 1,499,241 in 1960 (Barrett 1986).

To allow for some perspective, McDonalds, considered by many as emblematic of

globalization, has 70 million daily customers in 35,000 locations in 100 countries (McDonalds 2014). The AG has presence in approximately 50 more countries and claims 10 times the number of churches as McDonalds has restaurants. They also have roughly the same number of adherents as McDonalds has daily customers. The AG's impressive growth, starting with 300 people just over 100 years ago, is viewed as merely the beginning of an even larger story of global impact. The AG continues to expand, claiming over 500,000 conversions in 2016.

Coleman studies Christianity within globalization. He argues that charismatics construct 'a world within the world' – a separate and sub-cultural combination of material and physical elements resulting in a different understanding of the global from other ideologies (2000: 51-52). Charismatic Christians, by adopting a sub-culture oriented towards the global, understand their lives to have global meaning (Coleman 2000).

One of the most consistent themes I have encountered is an expansion rhetoric in the discourse of AG actors. As Joel Robbins frames it, 'Pentecostal Christianity's success as a globalizing movement is attested to not only by its rapid growth, but also by the range of social contexts to which it has spread. Appearing throughout the world in urban and rural areas, among emerging middle classes and, most spectacularly, among the poor, it has been deeply engaged by many populations that otherwise remain only peripherally or tenuously involved with other global cultural forms. As such, P/c represents a paradigm case of global cultural flow that begins historically in the west and expands to cover the globe' (Robbins 2004: 118).

The AG consistently utilizes a variety of media to communicate their goals. Missionaries to India are administratively situated in the 'Eurasia' region, one of five regional

departments that govern global outreach. One banner at the AG head office promoted the yet-to-be conquered territories and people groups in the 'Eurasia'. It read:

> ~ '2,456,600,000 people
>
> ~ 1,960,000,000 unreached people
>
> ~ 4,400 unreached people groups[84]
>
> ~ 44 nations & territories
>
> ~ 5 major religions: Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism
>
> ~ Spanning 3 continents: Europe, Africa, Asia
>
> ~ Only 1.5% Evangelical Christian.'

Banner at the AG head office in Springfield, MO, USA (Jensen 2014)

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[84] According to the World Mission Initiative, 'A people group is defined as a distinct ethnic community united by geography, language, and customs. To say that a people group is "unevangelized" or "unreached" means that it has no indigenous church to proclaim the gospel in its unique cultural context' (World Mission Initiative 2017).

In short, 'Pentecostalism is a powerful driver of radical cultural change' and its growth is of 'world historical in scope' (Robbins 2010: 156) and importance.

Centennial Celebration

There are moments in ethnographic discovery that might be considered synthesis, a single event that captures, as best as can be hoped for, the whole record. Such a moment occurred while I was attending the Assemblies of God (AG) centennial celebration in Springfield, MO, USA in August 2014. The occasion was the missions emphasis night with an AG missionary as the headline speaker. Many spoke to me and referred to the sermon delivered that night as 'prophetic'. The prophetic charisma[85] was operating through the speaker to redefine the AG's aims and objectives and to clarify God's desire for the AG church. The moment was considered historic and the sermon's logics often invoked the past to correct the present. God was simultaneously calling the AG back to its roots and forward to the unreached or not yet evangelized. The result was a single message that captured all of the major themes that my field notes and interviews had uncovered, and, as the last engagement of ethnographic enquiry into AG missionaries, provided a summary moment. What follows is a description of the 45-minute event.

The Meeting

Walking into the arena, it was clear that the AG had progressed significantly from its humble beginnings marked by poverty, meetings in tents, and brush arbours[86] and led by common

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[85] Charisma refers to a divinely conferred talent or power, specifically the 'gifts of the Spirit' listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 (NIV 1984) that include 'prophecy', a mouth-piece for God.
[86] Brush arbours were used as camp meeting shelters constructed from brush.

men. This was the 'Q' or JHQ Arena of Missouri State University, the largest indoor venue in Springfield, Missouri, USA. Springfield is also the headquarters of Assembly of God, USA and ostensibly the centre of the AG worldwide outreach.

As I entered, the halls were abuzz with interactions between the crowd that reminded me of other business conferences where colleagues work to re-connect with their network. The attendees were, from appearances, distinguished in their socio-economic make-up from the wrong side of the tracks congregations that marked the beginnings of the AG movement officially organized in Hot Springs, Arkansas 100 years prior. Delegations from over 120 countries included a head of state from Ghana and other well-dressed dignitaries, men dressed in expensive suits and women in modest but expensive dresses. To the eye, it was a solidly middle- to upper-class affair.

Three separate performance stages were spread across the floor of the arena with 9,637 seats rising to the ceiling. The centre stage was approximately 40 square metres, one and a half metres tall. There were five large video screens that were continuously ablaze with images. These screens normally reflected content from the stages that included emotional and well scripted preaching as well as music that was mostly alternative/pop versions of classic hymns ('Amazing Grace', etc.) with occasional blue grass and other world music. The program varied greatly and included short dramatic performances with scripted monologues from AG leaders all adorned in black suits. There were also human dramas to music performed by youth in message-laden purple t-shirts. The screens, at times, captured attention with nostalgic messages and, at other times, promotional videos highlighting the vast departments of the AG from financial lending institutions, to a publishing house, to program oversight for children and youth. The lighting and sound were broadcast and concert worthy, capturing all the senses toward emotion. An orange and black theme was set through lighting that rained from the rafters as well as from mood-setting black boxes.

These boxes were arranged around the stage and were cut with patterns that allowed light to shine from within them.
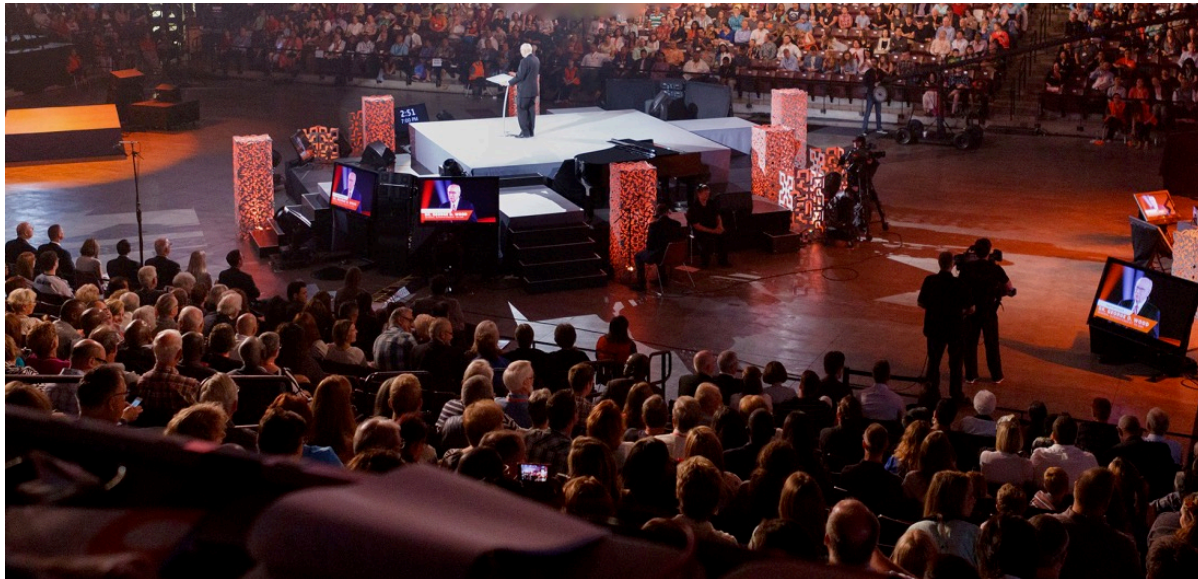
AG Centennial Celebration, Springfield, MO, USA (Sora 2018)

I had the impression that the crowd's emotions were firmly held in the control of the production booth. The affair reflected the fast-paced, multi-tasking, modern generation of the USA with no dead time between acts and always at least two things going on at the same time. Video images and lighting captured the visual while emotional singing and preaching captured the audio. There was no boredom as the fast-paced content was interwoven with musical performance, dramatic, video, and spoken performances that came to a crescendo with the introduction of the missionary hero

The Assemblies of God is no longer a brush arbour movement, it is a modern movement that is dependent upon relationships between global actors.

The Missionary Hero

The missionary speaker, A.P. Dirk, represented the Apostolic Function type described in the previous chapter. He was enthusiastically introduced by a presenter who described the social rewards that one enjoys as a high producing missionary who put his life in danger to produce rare goods (i.e. Muslim or Hindu conversion stories):

> 'We want to thank the Lord of the harvest for the passion, zeal and unwavering focus that he has placed in A.P. Dirk's heart, unwavering attitude toward the lost. We need the message that the Holy Spirit is speaking through Dirk, pulling us to see unreached people groups as Jesus sees them. Dirk is an extraordinary and unique individual.'

He went on to tell the story of Dirk's arrest and imprisonment in a Muslim city for having too many bibles. Rather than attempting to get out, Dirk, the 'stellar athlete', allowed the jailer to beat him at ping-pong to get out of jail. 'You can be sure that if Dirk loses at anything, there is a strategic purpose'.

He continued with a list of Dirk's credentials, including 1) born to AG missionary parents who worked in western Kenya, 2) spent extravagant time with Jesus, 3) passion to reach Arabs of the Middle East, 4) 'filled' and 'empowered' by the Holy Spirit to an apostolic creativity, 5) ideas and practical missiological application resulting in working models, 6) aimed to see substantial churches in 33 'gateway' cities of the Arab world, 7) Ph.D. from Assembly of God Theological Seminary, 8) established platforms and ministries in areas hostile to the gospel and 'lives to make Jesus famous and plant churches where people are yet to have the good news'. The video caption read, 'A.P. Dirk, Church Planter, Live/Dead'.

Dirk began his sermon by demonstrating extreme humility, calling himself a 'wretch'. He then previewed the central points of the sermon by using AG history as text to pivot toward a vision for future mission. He described the viability of the movement as dependent

on its willingness to convert unreached people groups (UPGs).

> 'Our obedience to God leads us into a flint-faced direction. There is hope for the AG only if we again unite in taking the Gospel at immense cost to places and people where it has not gone. We must do this or perish.'

Redefining Pentecost as Jesus' Fellowship

Dirk's first point, 'abiding with Jesus', was focused upon the core doctrinal ideas around the Holy Spirit. Reports of supernatural occurrences from AG USA missionaries are of a different nature than those from their Indian counterparts. The latter were far more likely to report seeing and experiencing miracles, healings, and exorcisms with most every conversion story including supernatural intervention. However, when I asked missionaries to 'describe the Holy Spirit's empowerment in your life' and 'describe any spiritual experiences you participate in', only a few who were over 40 years of age reported outward or visible spiritual interventions including healings and 'prophetic words'. The majority, especially younger missionaries, referred to the Holy Spirit in terms of internal and unseen forces that provided 'motivation' or 'encouragement', 'peace', 'guidance', 'direction', 'discernment', 'insight', 'protection from darkness', 'opened closed doors', and 'wisdom'. There seemed to be a generational component of either real or imagined change as both Indian and USA senior leaders lamented to me about the lack of spiritual manifestations in churches today. In this light, the opening theme of Dirk's message may be analyzed as redefining the Pentecostal movement around internal fellowship with Jesus. Spirituality was recast as internal unseen processes rather than external 'signs and wonders'. He captured the reality of the current spiritual life of the movement and at the same time redefined the expectation of what Pentecostal empowerment really means. This is similar to what Wallace (1956) understood as cultural changes within revitalization movements, which were intentional and

organized processes (rather than a slow and undirected process) initiated by members of a group to change its culture (1956).

He told his own story of empowerment for mission in terms of an internal relationship or 'being with Jesus in prayer', including a period of staying in an Arabic slum during which he prayed four hours a day. He said,

> 'We won't change the world because we are strong, we won't reach the nations because we are many, we will not evangelize the lost because we are rich, our power is not in our numbers, our power is not in ourselves. Our power is in the precious presence of Jesus, in abiding in Him.' (Applause).

He then reorganized the priorities of spiritual experience by redefining the Pentecostal experience. AG scholars have interpreted the book of Acts, especially Acts 2 (NIV 1984), as the foundation of classic Pentecostalism. These texts include stories of early Jesus disciples speaking different languages, healings, mortal slayings, and exorcisms. Similar experiences were reported at the Azusa street revival. Dirk, however, redirected this with a new centring around Jesus:

> 'The power of the Pentecostal is not ultimately in signs and wonders, for they will deceive even the elect if they are not helped and one day will cease. The strength of the Pentecostal is not found in ecstatic utterances for they also have a temporal role. The cardinal doctrine of Pentecost is more, but not just more personal power, but more of Jesus. Pentecostal power is rooted in the person of Jesus, the Spirit. It is the ongoing Spirit and reality of Jesus that empowers our witness. (George Wood, General Superintendent of the AG, can be heard saying 'amen' as the crowd applauds). We don't seek signs, we don't seek wisdom, we don't seek tongues, we seek the unbroken wonder of being lost in the presence of Jesus. Jesus is our power, Jesus is our sign, Jesus is our wisdom, Jesus is our tongue, Jesus is our distinctive. Jesus is focus, Jesus is wonder, Jesus is life, Jesus is all, and if we as a movement would return to the simplicity of just having Jesus, we will obey the great commission.'

Dirk's language when he said 'Jesus is our distinctive' seemed to be a subtle

challenge to the doctrinal distinction of the AG in which 'the initial physical evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues'.[87] Given that speaking in tongues continues to be a requirement for clergy to be ordained, as well as for missionary appointment, it might be better to understand Dirk's admonition as favouring internal communion rather than dismissing speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues in most of the meetings I have attended in the USA is, at any rate, a personal and private affair and no longer an outward, public, or seen manifestation. Dirk's refocusing of the gospel around Jesus suggests that although the experiences and methods of current AG missionaries have evolved missionaries are no less important to the AG network of exchange.

Recapturing an Apostolic Mission

The next part of Dirk's sermon touched the core description of the AG missionary effort: a call to recapture the apostolic mission. Dirk took a clear stand, invoking leaders from the past as texts to develop a theoretical missionary job description. Dirk's prophetic and corrective call to the listeners was straightforwardly economic: USA individual and church donors should fund and support apostolic function missionaries instead of resources or compassion types. He used Romans 15:18-19 (NIV 1984) as the biblical text to support this claim.

> [18]I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done [19] by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. (Romans 15:18-19, NIV 1984)

Invoking the apostle Paul as the example of an apostolic missionary, he proceeded to tie

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[87] The AG has 16 fundamental truths that make up their doctrine. The initial physical evidence is known as their 'distinctive' doctrine in that it separates them from other evangelical denominations.

verse 18 to the impressive missionary accomplishments of the AG's 100-year history.

> 'Praise and honour and glory to Jesus that the full gospel has been fully preached, praise Jesus that in these 100 years frontiers have been penetrated, indigenous churches have been planted around the world.'

Then, he invoked verse 20 toward continuing the push into yet reached areas:

> [20]It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. (Romans 15: 20, NIV 1984)

He set out an argument that acknowledged the shift of the Pentecostal movement toward the global south and used this shift to provide a reason for why AGWM is being left out of apostolic engagement. He asked to be an equal partner, and specifically, not to be relegated to funding the mission effort as partner or support missionaries. As we have seen, a shift toward missionaries starting churches and saving souls is already underway in North India with the majority of missionaries reporting some direct engagement with Hindus. Although Dirk advocated for a shift that is solidly already underway, he also set the frame for the international delegation and the donors in the crowd to follow the AGWM trend toward direct missionary engagement with the unreached. He said:

> 'The spiritual power centre of the global church is no longer in the North or West. I trust if you are an international delegate that you have not come to us seeking Pentecostal power, I trust that you have not come to these shores seeking from our churches power to live a crucified life, I trust that you are not fooled by our large buildings, our performing musicians or our arrogant postures. For the wind of Pentecost now blows and the fires of mission now rage not from us to thee but from thee to us. When western spiritual power is in decline and yours ascends to batter the gates of hell, do not, we beg you, ask us to close our eyes in prayer only for us to open them and find [that] in your hands alone is the work of global mission and in ours only the deadening weight of wealth. Do not, we implore you, condemn us to be only the funders and donors of the Gospel as you suffer and die for its advance, for if we are regulated only to supporting your sacrifice, we, of all me, will be the most pitiful. Brothers and sisters from the North and from the West, do not think that you can be fully obedient by resourcing the martyrdom of our friends from the comfort of our ivory palaces. We too must have our Calvary before we can have our Pentecost.'

He also quoted two former leaders of the AG movement to bolster his argument. First, he quoted a well-known leader from the 1980's, 'We must measure ourselves by what has been left undone'. Then he quoted another from the early 1960's:

> 'The missionary that is needed now, they say, is really a worker with some technical or pedagogical skills, and really a helper to the indigenous church, this emphasis would put the great commission in storage. Why the church adopts a kind of buddy system, while the real heroes of the cross are not men that confront heathen religions with the message of Calvary, but specialists that teach contour farming'.

In emphasizing the importance of apostolic function missions work and imploring attendees to consider the missionary's continued importance in such processes, Dirk once again situated missionaries as central components of the AG story.

Mission as Business

The missiological debate about the proper role of a missionary takes us back to the central argument of this study: that the AG missionary network and affiliate national churches are connected in globalized trade. Viewing the mission of the AG in North India through a lens of international market-driven business, I argue that Dirks' call for missionaries to go directly to the lost represents a variation of a long-established resourcing model that is well captured by commodity chain analysis. Employing such analysis provides insightful descriptions of the AG missionary network of relationships from consumers, or AG Donors, to the product, Saved Soul Stories.

Commodity-Value Chain

Initially based upon Wallerstein's 'world systems theory', global commodity chain analysis focuses on the network of production around one product or commodity produced along a

chain of interrelated 'nodes'.[88] Hopkins and Wallerstein define a commodity chain as 'a network of labour and production processes whose end result is a finished commodity' (Hassler 2009: 202). According to Gereffi, there can be either 'producer driven' or 'buyer driven' global value chains which consist of a series of functions, including product development, marketing, and distribution that are socially constructed and locally integrated (1994). Global Value Chain (GVC) is a further refinement of commodity chain analysis. Specifically, this analysis is helpful for those interested in global or widely geographically spread chains and provides methods to 'explain changes in governance patterns over time'. The GVC category of 'relational' governance is where 'mutual dependence regulated through reputation, social and spatial proximity, family and ethnic ties, and the like' and 'trust and reputational effects can operate in spatially dispersed networks as well' (Global Value Chains Initiative 2017).

Below, I will outline how the socially embedded economic organization of global AG Pentecostalism takes raw materials (Hindus, Muslims, and other non-Christians) and transforms them through the conversion process into intermediate goods (AG participants and converts) that are packaged, marketed, and distributed to consumers (AG donors). I argue that the AG missionary effort represents both cooperative and adversarial elements, is mostly buyer-driven but also shaped by story producers, and relationally governed. I offer the following model (Figure 2) as representative of the base commodity chain of the AG missionary effort to Delhi. This model represents a view of the commodity value chain with the following nodes and actors who produce saved soul stories (SSS):

- Production sites (mother churches, church plants, house meetings, and special

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[88] 'Each node has a set of structural components, which include acquisition and/or organization of inputs, employment policies, transport, distribution, and, finally, consumption. The nodal concept of commodity chains allows a division of the entire production process of a single product or commodity into its individual sequences, whereby each individual node's social and organizational construction can be analyzed' (Hassler 2009: 202).

meetings) rely upon senior pastors, associate pastors, and church members who represent labour. They produce converts from raw materials (Hindus, Muslims, and other non-Christians) who are represented by Saved Soul Stories (SSS). The connection between convert production and SSS lies at the nexus of the relationship of exchange between missionaries and Indian clergy. This may be a factor at motivating their converts past the participation-without-cost phase to full commitment. Although they are aware of the values of their congregations and their preferred emphasis upon pragmatic earthly provision, Indian clergy also have needs somewhat distinct from their parishioners. The church is, at least on some level, their shop. The size of their congregation and level of commitment of adherents, especially in matters of attendance, determines the growth of the church, their positional power, and financial wellbeing. They must produce authentic conversions to be considered worthy of donations from missionaries and/or donor churches in India or abroad.

- Missionary and Indian leader clergy entrepreneurs develop and/or identify with the production sites. These middlemen package the stories and production sites into consumables or SSS. As we have seen in the production and sale of SSS, consumables take the form of the numbers of souls saved; the difficulties, challenges, and cost in producing them; and the stories themselves. Value is added by embellishing the results/numbers or through adding elements to the stories like missionary hardship, sacrifice, Hindu/Muslim converts or compassion.

- AGWM sanctions missionaries, provides start-up capital, and administers funds for missionaries and Indian clergy taking a percentage for administrative overhead. So, AGWM plays the role of investment banker and accrediting body for the entrepreneurs. New missionaries are commissioned based upon three criteria: that

they a) have the proper ministerial credentials according to their assignment;[89] b) can raise a budget determined by AGWM according to their assignment; and c) demonstrate that God has called or chosen them for missionary service. Churches receive 'giving credit' or acknowledgment and awards by the national and district organizational structures in accordance with their missions giving. There is an expectation and precedent that churches support missionaries. Those that don't are considered deviants.

- Missionaries, Indian leaders, and AGWM all price and market these SSS and production site packages. They employ marketing strategies with promotional aids including various media and print material. They also conduct missions-focused meetings in churches all toward developing a culture of giving in the network. SSS represent work that has been done, but also the opportunities or work yet to be done among unreached people groups.

- USA churches act as retail outlets in which individual donors are exposed to SSS packages. Pastors determine which missionaries and Indian leaders to expose to the donors/buyers.

- Collective funds controlled by USA pastors and missions committees, as well as individual funds, are used to buy stories and packages through one-time and monthly support[90] of missionaries and Indian clergy. Individual USA church donors fund both the missions enterprise and their own church node through tithes, partly because of the church's participation in SSS production.

The social embeddedness of the project is seen in the shared values across the network toward reaching the 'lost' so that each 'node' in the process shares in the

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[89] Long-term 'appointed general' need to be ordained, missionaries in training and missionary associates normally need to be licensed to preach.
[90] Missionaries are traditionally supported with monthly pledges from multiple churches. These monthly pledges are augmented by one-time gifts for projects.

production of SSS and interprets their involvement as fulfilling their duty to be obedient to the great commission.[91]

Figure 4: Base AG Saved Soul Commodity Chain

Raw Materials: 'Unreached' Peoples, Including Hindus and Muslims	Church Plants	House Meetings	Special Meetings	Production Sites
	Mother Churches			Saved Soul Stories (SSS)
Entrepreneur Enterprise	Missionary		Indian Leader Clergy	SSS Value-Added
	Eurasia Region			
	AGWM USA		AGNI	Brand Accreditation
Promotion and Marketing			USA Donor Churches	Retail Outlet
	AG Lay Person			Buyer/Donor

Buyer/Donor Driven

These networks respond to buyers and are therefore donor/buyer-driven.[92] In categorizing

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[91] Matthew 28 (NIV 1984): 'Go therefore to all the world and preach the gospel and make disciples' is known by evangelicals as the great commission mandate.
[92] In using the terms 'buyer' and 'donor' interchangeably and am simply drawing a parallel using

the AG commodity value chain as buyer-driven, I have argued that AG missionaries in the base model (Figure 4) are merchandizers and not the true manufacturers in that, although they craft SSS that represent authentic conversions, they do not, except in rare occasions, win converts. Rather, missionaries use the AG brand or trademark and respond to donor/buyers in merchandizing and marketing stories according to the donor's desires (Gereffi 2014). Missionaries train donors on the importance of reaching the lost while donors exhibit consumer mentalities by exchanging their donation for the SSS that they find particularly attractive. This creates differentiation and competition between missionaries to craft ever more appealing SSS as described in the opening vignette of this chapter. Consumer language is used to express the donations given as purchase. I overheard one donor say, not noticing the unfortunate double meaning of his comments, 'I bought me three of those prostitutes' referring to giving 900 USD (700 GBP) in a church offering. Missionary Kyle had marketed 300 USD (230 GBP) SSS's in which the debt that a prostitute in Mumbai owed could be paid off, thereby freeing her from her pimp who purchased her from traffickers.

The priority of selling SSS is also demonstrated in the training that missionaries receive prior to their field assignment. Trainings are dominated by sessions dedicated to fundraising techniques, managing donation accounts, and donor church relations. The majority of time spent at denominationally sanctioned training sessions is not learning how to effectively communicate to prospective converts but how to interact with the consumers/donors. The result is that missionaries employ sophisticated techniques to craft marketing campaigns targeted at price points that donors can achieve for the highest volume of sales. A missionary fundraiser instructor, speaking to missionary trainees, suggested they determine the giving potential of prospective donor churches and then add

buyers as metaphors for donors. Rather, I am saying that donors are really purchasing the benefit of participating in the soul saving mission in exchange for money.

25 per cent in order to determine the amount that they should request or state as their need. Some promotional packages specifically link dollar figures to various programmes touted as producing souls: 2,000 USD (1,500 GBP) to build a church, 5,000 USD (3,900 GBP) for Muslim church plants, 300 USD (230 GBP) to rescue a girl from the brothel, and 100 USD (77 GBP) to support a student in an Indian bible college. It is interesting that what I did not see or hear is any campaign that directly monetizes converts. Although SSS include references to the numbers that have converted, there is nothing that directly advertizes a convert for a specific amount of money. Perhaps there is sensitivity that there are certain things that money cannot or should not buy (Sandel 1998). Funding a church, compassion ministry, or bible college that will result in converts appears to be in-bounds while selling converts themselves is not.

As we have outlined previously, there may be little correlation between the figures and how funds are actually used or how many actual soul production sites or SSS result. One donor pastor expressed cynicism after his group pledged 50,000 USD (39,000 GBP) to rescue girls from brothels at 300 USD (230 GBP) a piece, wondering if 169 girls were really rescued. As we have seen, it is clear that these cynicisms have some merit as much of what Indian clergy leaders, missionaries, and AGWM raise is spent on overhead including salaries, housing, and travel while five per cent is retained by AGWM USA for administration. There is little accountability that would stop a missionary from marketing a particular product and then using the funds for other things. After all, they are only selling stories, not shirts or automobiles. Because of this, most of the Indian clergy with whom I talked were sceptical of missionary marketing.

Rare or Preferred Goods

These pricing strategies and languages serve to demonstrate the reality that donors are really buyers, but, by themselves, they do not necessarily demonstrate that donors are the drivers of the production chain. However, the evidence for a donor-driven process grows as missionaries report that certain types of stories (e.g. compassion, child-care, Muslim outreach) are more likely to be sold or are preferred by the donors/buyers. As I have described, sermons of missionaries targeting prospective donors/buyers often include personal hardship or sacrifice narratives and tell emotional stories of the needs of Indians. Likewise, many North Indian missionaries connect themselves to the cause of rescuing victims of human trafficking even though these same missionaries state in interviews that their primary purpose is converts. As many more progressive donor churches are compelled to give based solely upon social justice elements, these missionaries identify themselves with anti-trafficking and other emotive compassion related initiatives to garner support.

Finally, there is a growing desire to support missionaries who directly engage with the lost or unreached. As we explore the changes in the AG commodity chain in the coming sections, it is clear that these changes are in part related to buyers/donors preferring certain products and wanting the best return (number of SSS) on investment. It should be noted that, in some cases, missionaries attempt to shape donor appetites through their messaging campaigns. This most obviously includes Dirk's sermon whose primary audience was made of USA pastors/retailers and donors/buyers. However, regardless of the missiologists' or missionary practitioners' desires, the operation is dependent upon the donors/buyers. They, not the producers, set SSS values, creating a demand-driven marketplace. Another example of this is marketing strategies that portray missionaries in a militant struggle for souls, willing to suffer and die for the cause. What is more valuable than a commodity that is worth dying for?

Furthermore, the Eurasia Region department at AGWM produces high quality print and video promotional materials that benefit missionaries and the department's coffers. The Eurasia region includes Hindu and Islamic dominant countries, so, expectedly, their marketing normally includes SSS with the value added of scarce 'Muslim' and 'sacrifice' themes. Their promotion booth at the centennial celebration was in the exhibit hall and had free coffee from 'Eurasia Café' and comfortable couches. So, I decided to sit for some time and observe. An older gentleman, I presumed a pastor, assumed me to be a Eurasia representative given my long loitering. He asked, 'What is *Live Dead* campaign?' referring to print pieces and a large banner. I proceeded to tell him what I understood, that it was a campaign to reach the 'unreached' through church planting teams. He pressed, asking 'why *Live Dead*? What does that mean?' I said something to the effect, 'I think it reflects the missionary commitment to the cause of saving souls even to the point of death'. I told him of AGWM's previous year's 'pack your coffin' theme for newly commissioned missionaries. He proceeded to say 'Oh, kinda our response to the Islamic suicide bombers'.

This spurred my thinking about the various ways in which missionaries and AGWM promote the effort. Using terms like 'boots on the ground', 'pack your coffin', and 'live dead', there is a clear symbolic connection to military heroes who altruistically lay down their lives for the cause. In my interviews with missionaries, I failed to ask specifically about their self-understanding in which I could have said, 'do you see yourself risking your life to conquer the world of unreached people for Jesus?' The highly charged language of martyrdom is consistent with Christ's death and resembles a military call to battle. Dirk, an alumnus of Evangel University, an AG bible college whose mascot is the 'Crusaders', used his final point as a call to be willing to suffer and die for the cause.[93]

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[93] Dirk lists the following biblical references to bolster his call to willingness to suffer: Acts 9:11-16, 2 Corinthians 11:23-27, 2 Corinthians 6:4-10, 2 Corinthians 4:8-12, Hebrews 11:36-40, Galatians 2:20,

'Thanks be to God who always leads us in his triumph from victory to cross, victory to cross. The renaissance and renewal of the Assemblies of God lies only on the other side of Calvary. We must have our cross before we have our resurrection. We hunger for the cross not because we want to die but because we long to live and because decisions made for self-preservation are indicators of those already dead. Our hope is in the resurrection, and it is axiomatic that we suffer and die. Death has no terror to a church that believes in resurrection. Our immediate future is one of suffering. Jesus bore his cross not ours. Brothers and sisters from all nations, in these last days before Jesus comes, can we march to battle neither in our land or yours, can we not commit ourselves to live and die together far from either one of our homes, can the American join the Kenyan and die together in Mogadishu? Can not the focus of our partnership be among the people groups who have no church, hear no Gospel, see no hope and receive no witness? Cannot African, Asian, Arab, and American blood be mingled together in Yemen for the cross of Christ? Mingled together from a prison in Saudi Arabia?'

The call to embrace suffering and abandoning comforts and safety is argued to be the source of ultimate success. Dirk argued that suffering itself leads to victory in the spiritual realm and the establishment of the church worldwide.

'We will only reach our world if we abandon ourselves to this costly call. The glorious church is a suffering crucified church because something about suffering for Jesus' sake defeats demonic powers. When Jesus is so precious to us that his people are willing to embrace trials, some force is released in the spirit realm, something divine is hurled against and splinters the gates of hell. Only suffering for Jesus' sake in Jesus' way builds the church. Only the suffering for Jesus' sake that realizes the evangelization of the world. If the price of world-wide evangelism is our organizational demise, should we not willingly pay it? If the cost is to send our children to be crushed and die should we not willingly pay it? If the price to lift the cross above every ideology and falsehood is that we are crushed, derided, marginalized, and abused, scorned, vilified, shall we not willingly pay it?'

After hearing the highly charged rhetoric in his message, I decided to check the AG archives to find out how many AG missionary martyrs there have been in its 100 year history. The archivist sent me back a list of three, none from the recent past and none from

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Galatians 5:24, Galatians 6:14, Colossians 1:11, Acts 20:22-24, Philippians 1:13, 20-21-29, Acts 28:20,22, 1 Corinthians 16:9, 2 Corinthians 7:3-5, Romans 14:7-9, 1 Corinthians 15:30-31, 1 Thessalonians 1:6, 2 Timothy 2:3,9,12; 2 Timothy 1:8,11-12; 2 Thessalonians 1:5; Romans 8:17, Hebrews 2:10 and 5:8, Philippians 2:7-8,17, Matthew 13:21, John 12:24, John 15:18-20, Luke 21:16-19, Matthew 10:21-39, Matthew 24:7-14, Luke 6:20-26 (NIV 1984).

the Muslim world. Thus, the rhetoric does not match the reality. The call to arms is somewhat softened by the reality that AG missionaries are very careful not to put themselves at risk. In India's history, there are no recorded incidents of physical abuse or imprisonment of missionaries. In the last year, there is one example of an AG missionary being imprisoned for a few days. However, the story that was relayed to me claimed that the imprisonment was not related to Hindu or Muslim persecution but the result of an internal AG of India political dispute in which a rival Indian pastor reported the missionary for violating the terms of his visa (which is a common practice as few, if any, AG missionaries in the country have missionary visas). Perhaps the relatively few examples of martyrdom or persecution toward AG missionaries prompted the following explanation from Dirk in which he rapidly connected the good fortune of the past to the call to arms moving forward.

> 'As a movement, we have been favoured, we have been allowed to grow, we have been protected for one purpose. We go with flinted face to our cross, that we suffer for Jesus' sake, suffer well. We lose our lands and our titles, that we lose our prestige, wealth, influence, lives, that we joyfully abandon comforts, that we become less that Jesus rise.'

In utilizing self-sacrificial and war-like rhetoric, missionaries appeal to their audience who are given the same messages from the U.S. military and other sub-cultures that promote international intervention. Willingness to sacrifice is celebrated as heroism among observers who support a conquering or protecting effort. The comparison between Christian fundamentalism and radical Islam is also often drawn given the shared 'logical construction of their ideological discursive justifications' (Henson and Wasserman 2011). Although each movement has different content, they are 'underpinned by a similar system of logic' (ibid 2011). AG missionaries do share logics with radical Islam such as the provision of eternal rewards for those who sacrifice their lives for the cause. However, a precise view of Pentecostal fundamentalism exposes a key difference. Whereas radical Islam 'encourages

violent revolt against perceived abuses by the West' (ibid: 42), its adherents willing to kill in defence of their religion from perceived threats in protecting their culture from invasion by outsiders, Pentecostals are offensive in posture, targeting territory not yet saved or 'reached'. And, whereas a radical Islamist is willing to kill others in order to protect, Pentecostals have no such rhetoric or history. Rather, they follow the example of their earthly prophet. AG missionaries therefore utilize a 'boots on the ground' rhetoric to increase the social and financial benefits they receive from donors. As Dirk put it, and supported with a plethora of scriptures that point in various ways to the expectation that Jesus' followers, especially those who take up his apostolic mission should expect hardship, suffering, and death:

> 'Embrace suffering for Jesus' sake as our normal reality. This is what happens to prophetic spirit-filled churches'.

Relationally Governed

In addition to being donor-driven, the global AG commodity chain is relationally governed, a matter of trust over time. The SSS commodity is well captured by relational value chains consisting of 'mutual dependence through reputation', 'social proximity', 'family ties', requirement of trust over time and a closed set of 'firms' (Global Value Chains Initiative 2017). Relationships between nodes drive the connections that move commodity and money through the AG chain. Every node of the chain is autonomous: donor/buyer churches are organized as cooperative fellowships;[94] AG missionaries raise their own support and are

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[94] 'The national church is called 'The General Council of the Assemblies of God.' In keeping with the original intention of the founding body, the Assemblies of God is considered a cooperative fellowship instead of a denomination. As a result, the national headquarters operation exists primarily as a service organization, providing educational curriculum, organizing missions programs, credentialing ministers, overseeing the church's colleges and seminary, producing communication channels for the churched and non-churched publics, and providing leadership for many national programs and ministries of the Assemblies of God (Acts 16:4-5; Hebrews 13:17)' (Assemblies of God 2017).

legally self-employed; and AGWM, AGNI and other national church general councils relate to each other through the World Assemblies of God Fellowship. [95] These autonomous national church organizations sanction their own clergy from among whom leaders are elected for governance. Likewise, production sites (Indian churches) are normally autonomously registered and governed and choose to associate with AGNI as a matter of relationship.

Although Indian clergy tend to exhibit far more hierarchical respect and responsiveness to their elected leaders than their American counterparts, most of the nodes in both the United States and India relate to each other on the basis of trust and loyalty to the AG brand rather than legal mechanisms. This both conforms to and challenges other descriptions of Pentecostal movements that according to Robbins 'tend to be locally led and to produce numerous religious leaders with limited authority rather than a few extremely powerful charismatic giants' (2010: 162). The AG network displays both numerous autonomous religious leaders and a few charismatic giants that normally occupy the 'middle-men' positions on the chain, Indian leader clergy or missionaries that are exceptional networkers and fundraisers. But it remains true that each node is free to not participate in the network; if it breaks away, it will lose only the benefits of the collective and can continue to operate autonomously. The relational connections of the movement, up and down the chain, are aided through multiple corporate meetings, gatherings that foster relationships between donor pastors, missionaries, and production site churches. Kyle, the AG missionary fundraiser put it succinctly, 'building relationships is the key to fundraising'.

Relational governance also situates power in the hands of those who control the

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[95] 'The purpose of the World Assemblies of God Fellowship is to pursue the fulfilment of the Lord's command to evangelize the lost in the shortest possible time, providing them the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel in all of its fullness, by encouraging and assisting one another, promoting harmonious relationships, and seeking the most effective means of its accomplishment under the dynamic leadership of the Holy Spirit.' (World Assemblies of God Fellowship 2010).

resources. Sahoo has argued that, in the Indian context, donor driven models of development can result in 'incentive-induced' participation, 'organized dependency', and patron-client relationships between the donor controlled intermediary and the development project recipients (2013). The flow of funds for SSS has been argued to create dependency, with small pastors dependent upon big pastors, who in turn depend upon missionaries, who depend upon donors. Some missionaries see the base chain as subverting the indigenous church principles of the *de facto* missionary handbook by Hodges (2009). Most obviously, the self-supportive value and, secondarily, the self-governance value are subverted when power gravitates towards the donor and is mediated by the missionary and Indian clergy leaders. The flow of funds from USA donors to Indian churches therefore undoes autonomy when indigenous churches or general councils are financially dependent, perhaps even leading to patron client relationships. This patron client relationship between missionaries and Indian churches/pastors is a concern to AG missionaries who believe in the indigenous church strategy.

Both Individualist Competition and Holist Cooperation

Given the unequal nature of relationships between the entrepreneurs (AGWM missionaries and Indian clergy leaders) and the labour (Indian clergy and lay leaders) in that power is situated amongst those who hold resources and connections with USA donors, it is not surprising that the analysis of the AG commodity chain reveals both adversarial competition and relationships of cooperation. First, there are clear signs of American individualism and competition between the nodes at each zone.[96] Missionary entrepreneurs compete with

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[96] This competition rests upon the creation of modern individual subjects and follows what many anthropologists have observed that 'Pentecostalism generally introduces some form of individualism into the cultures of its converts' (Robbins 2010: 168).

each other either on the basis of geography (number of unreached people groups), hardship endured, volume of souls saved, and value added SSS (i.e. compassion, persecution, hardship). Furthermore, AGWM regional offices compete for dollars and new missionary recruits. Each region has its own separate marketing and messaging team to appeal to donor churches. This competition is also seen between production sites, the Indian clergy who compete to attract missionaries, and Indian clergy leaders as connections to donors. Indian clergy need not necessarily represent truly effective soul saving operations but, rather, must be effective at creating and marketing stories that are useful to missionaries. In most cases, this is a matter of stating the success of their outreaches which the missionary can then claim as their own. Theoretically, the more inflated and outrageous the stories, the more funds they can demand and the more power the Indian clergy will enjoy. Indian clergy have lamented to me that the honest or humble among them receive the fewest dollars and are not recognized.

Finally, the adversarial nature of connections between Indian clergy and missionaries is also evident. Indian clergy comments about missionaries to me included suggesting that the latter are lazy, that they 'only work two hours a day and stay two to three years and go back', are not to be trusted because they promise funds but often do not follow through, are a non-factor in soul production, 'accomplish nothing', and 'take credit for our (Indian clergy) work by giving a little bit of money and taking pictures'. Since the lifeblood of the commodity chain is value-added marketing, missionaries who constantly perfect their fundraising campaigns often realize the highest benefits and maintain power in the form of relational capital or influence. This no doubt adds to the distrust that Indian clergy have. Missionaries, likewise, had negative things to say about Indian clergy including that they only value missionaries for their financial contributions and that they are mostly concerned about

political office rather than the kingdom mission.[97] Overall, however, the network is best defined by significant cooperation between the nodes. There is a general kindness and respect shown between the Indian clergy and AGWM. After all, each depends upon the other to some extent. This interdependency is marked by cordiality and publicly speaking positively of one another. In some cases, missionaries and Indian clergy display close friendships.

Innovations in the Commodity Chain

The following sections describe three variations of the base AG value chain model that are evident from my research as evolving out of the base value chain described above. These variations include direct to supplier, missionary SSS production, and Indian consumption. Variations are currently emerging within AGWM and represent changing relationships and structures within the commodity chain.

Direct to Supplier

The first variation in the AG commodity chain is direct to supplier. A missiological argument in support of this idea was written by a non-AG Indian clergy and sold under the title *Revolution in Mission* (Yohannan 1986).[98] Yohannan has become a prominent protestant Indian clergy leader by building a multi-million-dollar operation to fund Indian church planters. He convinces donors that Indians are cheaper and more effective than western

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[97] 'Kingdom of God' taken from Jesus narratives throughout the NT is understood as mission work or investment that is not done for the benefit of any individual node but for overall soul saving goals.
[98] *Revolution in Mission* by non-ag Pentecostal Indian leader K.P Yohannan (1986) argues that a much better return on investment can be achieved when supporting the $500 per month Indian church planting clergy in comparison to the $6,000 per month foreign missionary.

counterparts and therefore offer a better return on investment (ROI) for donors in America. When I talked to Indian clergy and missionaries about this trend, they both agree that 'direct to supplier' relationships exist wherein USA donor/buyer churches develop relationships with and directly fund an Indian clergy's ministry. The missionary middleman is bypassed as USA donors and churches fund Indian clergy and production sites directly. There is no doubt Indian pastor's better understanding of their audiences results in far greater effectiveness at communicating the locally planting churches a threat to missionaries hegemony especially when they are able to communicate their success directly to American donors and bypass missionary middlemen.

This parallels global capitalism in which capital migrates to the most advantageous conditions in which labour and environmental laws are low or corrupted and have the advantage of producing with less cost and cutting out as many intermediary traders as possible.

In the direct to supplier model, American church pastors replace the missionary as patron. An Indian pastor of a medium sized but wealthy congregation in the Delhi region stated plainly, 'missionaries no longer mean anything to us' or 'they (missionaries) do their own thing and we do our own thing'. According to Bauman, mission agencies are 'radically shifting their support for missionaries away from Americans and toward native workers' because of a 'superior return on investment' (2015: 137). Bakker in 'Sister Churches' (2013) traces the direct partnerships, collaborations, and interconnectivity of churches in the Global South with their American supporting churches. This direct connection makes sense in India according to Bauman as American missionary presence reinforces claims of Christianity being foreign and dependent upon the west: 'Indian Christians complain, they (Americans) are also terribly ineffective as missionaries'. They 'rarely live for very long in India anymore. So, they don't know how to communicate with Indians. And even when they do appear to

provoke conversions, the conversions are generally short-lived' (Bauman 2015: 153).

Cutting out the missionary node is driven from two directions. First, donors increasingly desire direct connections with and ownership over soul production sites. They are sometimes sceptical of stories that missionaries promote and often do not want their donations to fund overhead costs such as missionary salaries and denominational structures. Second, many Indian clergy feel that missionaries sell SSS from their production sites without exchanging enough donations. In practice, there is a growing number of Indian clergy who travel to USA donor churches to market their SSS as well as short-term missions trips by USA churches who visit production sites and fund these sites directly. Not all clergy who have been exploited in their past relationships with missionaries enjoy these direct connections. It is normally only the senior pastors of larger churches with many smaller branches who are able to afford plane tickets to visit the USA for fundraising and who attract short-term trips through relational networking.

Missionary Producers

The second variation to the base commodity chain is direct missionary production of converts that can be turned into SSS. This variation is directly related to the shift in India toward Apostolic Function Missionary types who produce SSS in their own production sites/church plants. Whereas in the first variation the missionary nodes are bypassed, in the second variation the Indian clergy nodes are bypassed. I return to Dirk's sermon to demonstrate the strong push toward this variation when he challenged the other two missionary types (resource and compassion) and directly exhorted donors to fund apostolic function types.

> 'The end of our missionary task cannot be supporting national churches, the staffing of indigenous institutions, that we swap workers amongst fraternal fellowships. These are means but not ends. The culmination of missions is therefore not Christians traveling across land and sea to minister in each other's churches. Logically and biblically, mission requires a focused intensity and directed apostolic function, compels us to the regions and peoples beyond.'

He challenged compassion types by encouraging donors to support 'boots on the ground missionaries' over one-time 'sexy projects' and spoke of 'the human right' to hear the gospel which he defined in negation through the 'human wrong'. In this way, he contrasted compassion types with a human rights agenda.

> The Assemblies of God takes up the fundamental human right, the human wrong is that due to laziness and fear and disobedience, no AG missionary was sent to the Arabian Peninsula for almost 100 years after Azusa street. How dare we boast of being Spirit-empowered when this disobedience mars our record. The human wrong is that we are willing to send our children as soldiers to Iraq and Afghanistan but unwilling to send them there as missionaries. (Slow laboured/divided applause). The right thing to do is preach the Gospel, the humane thing to do is focus on eternal souls.'

He uses return on investment terminology to argue that supporting apostolic function types is a buyer's/donor's best investment in favour of missionary-produced converts.

> 'If you are here tonight and a pastor an Assembly of God church, but do not support boots on the ground missionaries, you may carry our name but you have no part in our spirit… (large applause) … live in defiant disobedience to the Holy Ghost. Dollars for one-time sexy projects can seduce us so that… slide from the greatest impact of missions giving monthly support of boots on the ground missionaries.'

He also invoked strong loyalty and membership terminology to shame churches not participating in apostolic function by giving or going.

'[You are not AG if] your budget does not prioritize… the utter most parts of the earth. If you personally do not sacrificially give, pray, and fast that unreached people will be reached with the Gospel… might carry ordination card in wallet… closer to your stomach than the heart of God. Do you want to be quintessentially Assemblies of God? Resign your position of comfort and salary, step out to regions beyond, plant a church, go live and die where Christ has not been named and then we will call you Assemblies of God. If we do not recommit ourselves… we should write Ichabod over our churches… the glory of God will pass us by… relegated to the dust bin of church history.'

AGWM's move toward Apostolic Function Missionaries in India has included a structural innovation where missionaries are grouped into teams. Earlier entrepreneurial and individual missionaries now relate to a team leader rather than the geographically determined leader or area director. The goal is to produce a cooperative rather than adversarial relationship among missionaries. So, although competition may exist between teams, with some expressing conflict with or lack of respect for their team leaders, the change seems necessary to build support and give direction to missionaries as they engage unreached communities directly.

Whereas the relationship between missionaries is more cooperative, the relationship between missionaries and Indian clergy is more adversarial under the variation. Now, Indian clergy and missionaries occupy the same space as direct producers of converts sold as SSS. This variation is questioned by some resource missionaries that I spoke with who believe that Indian clergy, who have advantages over missionaries such as knowing the language, will continue to out-produce apostolic function missionaries. However, given that what is being sold is not actual converts but only stories, missionaries have a marketing edge over Indian clergy, and it is likely that this strategy will continue even if the real results (authentic conversions) wane.

Indian Saved Soul Stories Consumption

Finally, the third trending variation reflects that the new centre of AG Pentecostalism is the global south. This is the direct consumption of SSS by Indian churches (mostly large south Indian congregations) who support the church planting efforts of the North.

According to the top North Indian leader, South Indian churches now support much larger numbers of Indian clergy church planters in the North than their missionary counterparts. Most of the larger churches in Delhi have missions budgets to allow them to fund smaller works spread throughout North India as well. The majority of small pastors I spoke to also more often reported being supported from large Indian churches than from USA missionaries. Moreover, they tend to credit the growth of the AG in North India to South Indian missionaries. This is in contrast with most influential Indian clergy who have direct connections to USA donors and who tend to credit missionaries for the growth of the AG in North India. Perhaps this follows from India's emerging economy with huge jumps in consumption among all urban groups.

Conclusion

The AG story is a global story. It is also a story of relationships, expressed in a single missionary sermon that outlines the shared values and ontologies that bind together network partners. Together, they reach the lost by trading in the stories of saved souls, or cosmological commodities. It is a relationally governed network in which missionaries occupy the space between American pastors, the gatekeepers to fundraising opportunities, and Indian pastors, the producers of success stories in churches planted, and souls saved (the goods that are marketed).

Donors drive the operation by consuming saved soul stories, and, in consuming, expressing a preference for stories with elements of missionary danger and hardship, of rare or difficult to reach souls, and of help for the poor and exploited. These stories stir the emotions of donors who are compelled, both by AG Pentecostal theology and by the packaging of SSS by missionaries, to become part of the great commission efforts and to receive social and eternal rewards in return for their sacrifices. It is a competitive chain in which missionaries compete for fundraising opportunities, Indian pastors compete for missionary connections, and American pastors compete for recognition. Like the global economy and the age of technology in which it operates, it too is changing by allowing direct access between Indian pastors and American donor churches, and motivating missionaries to self-produce converts and legitimize their place as they slowly lose their middle-man powers. It is also a story of the AG in the global south, which has taken the prominent role in sending and supporting church planters working independently from US missionaries.
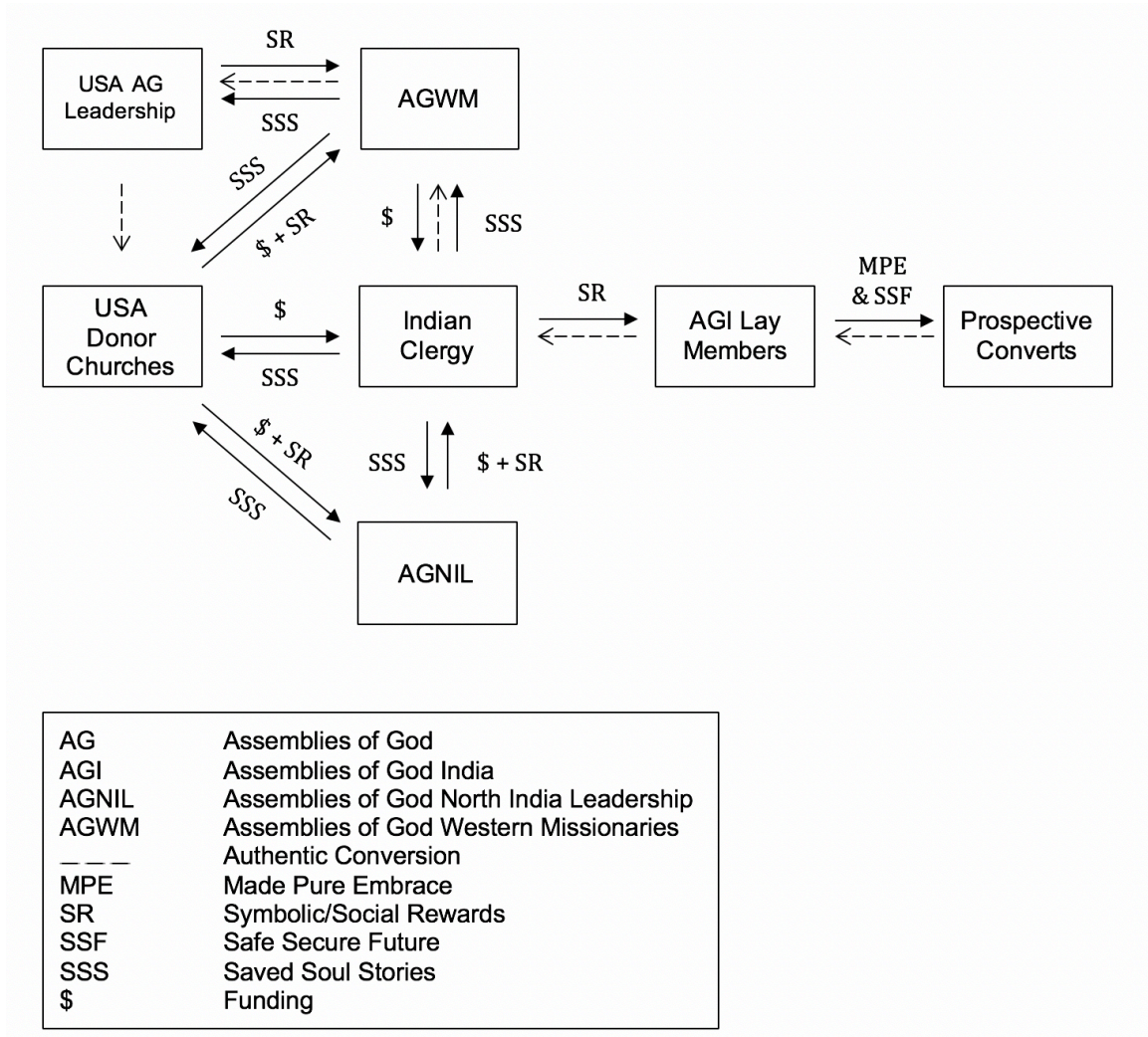
Conclusion

Research Objectives and Arguments

This study has taken up as its central research objective describing and theorizing the global expansion of the Assemblies of God. In the process of the multi-sited research, I decided to take up an economic approach and analyze the AG network as an international business that produces converts and funds the project by selling conversion stories and missional success to USA donors. I chose this approach because it is best attuned to address AG mission as an expression of global capitalism and related key questions related to its success, including how converts are produced and how the project is funded, as well as the power dynamics involved and ethics of the missionary enterprise.

The relationships and processes outlined by this study and the economically framed paradigm of social, financial, and eternal elements has been represented by a global commodity chain in which the products, actors, and motivations of each are dictated by shared social values in the processes of exchange. Theories of exchange were also used to explore both the conversion process in AG churches in Delhi, India and fundraising (see Figure 5).

The growth of the Assemblies of God and the Pentecostal movement in general is the result of several factors that work together to motivate a global expansion of planting churches and reaching the lost. These include the global commodification of converts as Saved Soul Stories (SSS). These are traded as luxury goods by missionaries and Indian clergy back to donors who capitalize the project.

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Figure 5: AG Network of Exchange

AG	Assemblies of God
AGI	Assemblies of God India
AGNIL	Assemblies of God North India Leadership
AGWM	Assemblies of God Western Missionaries
_ _ _	Authentic Conversion
MPE	Made Pure Embrace
SR	Symbolic/Social Rewards
SSF	Safe Secure Future
SSS	Saved Soul Stories
$	Funding

This process is facilitated by indigenous church principles that encourage local leadership structures and local theologizing, paradoxical doctrines that allow for locally appropriated meanings that appeal to *Dalit* Hindus, an active laity that serves to introduce new prospects into welcoming middle class churches, pastors that replace Hindu practitioners and icons, Holy Spirit rituals that render the promises of the prosperity gospel plausible, and development activities of the local church that work to uplift the socially and economically marginalized. The global network is relationally governed, both cooperative

and adversarial in nature, donor-driven in its financial reliance upon American churches, and is operated by missionaries who work with their own set of incentives and strategies

Three Exchanges

I have represented the success of the AG in India as a result of three exchanges. First, there is a commodification of the conversion process in which those who respond to gospel knowledge, including converts, Indian clergy, missionaries, and donors, are motivated by participation with economic (missionary and Indian clergy financial support) and symbolic (social status) benefits from production and trade. These benefits increase when SSS come from unreached people group (UPG) areas or when the story has a compassion element. Given their scarcity, these are considered rare (or higher valued) goods. Further, I have argued that two value added elements turn SSS into luxury goods. First, if SSS has the added narrative that outlines the poverty and physical hardship of the convert, the story is particularly valuable to the actors in the commodity chain. Second, stories are valued more if converts are from unreached nations or regions where Christianity has a small or non-existent footprint. AG donors are more likely to capitalize or consume SSS when ancillary activities of helping the poor or rescuing girls from red light districts are included, or when converts are Muslim, Hindu, or from other UPGs.

I have also argued that two relational exchanges of ethical and spiritual commitments between converts and the church account for convert production. Initially, AG churches offer what I have termed the Made Pure Embrace (MPE) in exchange for participation using free gift logics. The MPE is especially attractive to low cast rural migrants who find themselves in urban Delhi, disconnected from prior structures of religious power, and free to explore available options and identities. These prospective converts are allowed to participate in the

AG social and hold dual affinities (Hinduism and AG) for multiple years prior to conversion. As such, converts are able to test the results of a new AG cosmology, social, and identity prior to water baptism and the social rupture of an authentic conversion. They are allowed to try before they buy. This extended process allows potential converts, who have low margins of error with regard to their economic security, to continue practicing Hinduism and negotiate family pressures and religious fears. They also develop strong emotional and relational bonds and a growing dependency upon the pastor that provides a replacement for their Hindu religious mediator counterparts. The AG churches benefit from prospect participation that results in increased crowd size and signals a successful pastor to missionaries and donors.

Authentic conversion is the result of this second exchange of sacrifices that I have titled the Safe Secure Future (SSF). This exchange, marked by the ritual of water baptism, is where a new regime takes hold and AG power manifests. The free offer of try-before-you-buy participation is replaced with a full commitment, change of identity, and a strict break from Hinduism. Various levels of family and community backlash that Indian clergy call persecution normally accompany this exchange. The anti-conversion narratives of political Hindu discourse fuel these negative consequences for new converts and I argue serve to codify them into the Pentecostal fold.

I have followed the conversion career approach (Gooren 2010) where multiple steps are treated as together accounting for the conversion act. The two-exchange conversion I have described where converts first belong and then after an extended liminal period commit can be broken down into the following seven most common elements ordered as follows: (1) pre-conversion struggles, (2) an existing relationship with an AG believer, (3) welcome to the congregation from the pastor, (4) crypto-religious participation, (5) fulfilling the requirements for baptism, (6) water baptism, and (7) the codification of their new identity

being sealed off form the past by demonization of Hinduism, the demands of rupture with the past, and rejection of them by their Hindu family and community.

What Values Compel Saved Soul Producers?

What may appear to be a series of irrational actions of AG participants from a formalist economic perspective are sensible when understood from Pentecostal cultural values and logics. The actions are a reflection of valuing individualism expressed as competition as well as holism expressed in cooperation and acting for the benefit of others. It is an example of hierarchal dynamism where hierarchy is socially productive, a holism with elements of egalitarian individualism and mobility. Producers (missionaries and Indian clergy), who are ranked according to their capital and production, are rewarded socially with the highest status as altruistic heroes who sacrifice for the benefit of saving souls. They are also rewarded economically as either producers or traders who capture capital for the mission but also benefit themselves as evidenced by an increased standard of living for those who are most effective. Finally, all of these actors are rewarded eternally as they 'lay up for themselves treasures in heaven' (Matthew 6:20) (NIV 1984) as a result of taking the gospel to the poor and unreached.

This same dynamism drives Indian pastor and lay member proselytizers who rise in social status based upon wealth and production. Indian churches benefit economically when they exchange converts gained to missionaries and donors as SSS. AG laity empowered to do the work of the ministry, including proselytism, are motivated by increased social status in an AG hierarchy that mirrors capitalistic values of production and wealth. This motivates AG

laity toward becoming producers of converts by compelling their Hindu friends, neighbours, classmates, co-workers, and family groups to try out the AG.

What Compels Hindus to Convert?

This brings us to the question of what are the factors that compel Hindus to complete the conversion process. The study has exposed three key motivators (localized gospel, relational embrace, liminal period) leading to the first conversion exchange, and two additional compelling aspects (Holy Spirit experiences, socio-economic uplift) of participation that lead to the second and final conversion exchange.

Localized Gospel

The first factor is the production of a localized prosperity gospel that emphasizes a loving God and a powerful Holy Spirit. The AG missionary enterprise also encourages local expressions and control, valorising indigenous church principles that promote self-governance, support, and propagation of the movement, and allows affiliated church networks the freedom to shape the conversion message or self-theologize toward local expressions of Pentecostalism that are attractive within the context.

This freedom to localize meanings and ritual operates within the boundaries of the AG doctrinal cannon. These teachings include support for values of eternally, otherworldly, and supernatural enchantment while at the same time promoting a worldly and pragmatic health and wealth prosperity. I argue that these emphases represent a subtle contestation through mimicry (Bhabha 1994) that is made possible by a wide swath of potential meanings in which competing values are sanctioned in its doctrine. The doctrinal paradoxes of AG

Pentecostal knowledge may account for its chameleon abilities. Knowledge is a negotiation that results in multiple possibilities in any given context as categories, knowledge and structure are accepted by trading partners but variously prioritized, emphasized, and consumed. Values and categories are not transformed as culture change but consumed according to the various tastes and needs of those in the commodity chain. This process is therefore homogenizing and localizing at the same time.

Welcome Embrace

The AG is made compelling through relationships and welcome. At every step in the conversion career, the importance of relational connectivity and social bonding is clear. Initially, converts are introduced by their AG friends and colleagues and coached through the MPE exchange. The laity are integral since nearly all first generation converts had prior personal relationships with AG participants. The laity normally promise dramatic results and testify to the benefits of conversion.

Furthermore, prospective converts build relationships with the pastor and other seasoned lay leaders that are living icons of hope, teachers, and mediators. Over time, they become a part of the AG community and these intersubjective experiences serve to usher them into new knowledge subjectivity. AG converts normally socialize into AG community long before they commit or profess.

The truths of the Made Pure Embrace are fleshed out in welcome all. This is especially attractive to low cast rural migrants who find themselves in urban Delhi, disconnected from prior structures of religious power, and free to explore available options and identities.

Liminal Period

Another key factor is that prospective converts are allowed to participate in the AG social and hold dual affinities (crypto-religion) for multiple years prior to conversion. As such, converts are able to test the results of a new AG cosmology, social, and identity prior to water baptism and the social rupture of an authentic conversion. They are allowed to try before they buy. This extended process allows potential converts, who have low margins of error with regard to their economic security, to continue practicing Hinduism and negotiate family pressures and religious fears. All of the conversion stories I heard also included a healing story. These healings are important at moving converts to increased participation.

Holy Spirit Experiences

I argue that two compelling aspects of AG life eventually move converts to full conversion. First, Holy Spirit rituals act as compelling affect. The converts' process of discovering and subjecting themselves to AG knowledge is aided by compelling experiences of affect. The Holy Spirit as affect renders the hopeful promises of AG pastors and laity plausible given the emotional contagion of Pentecostal rituals. The increased intensity of these rituals is understood to be proof that the Holy Spirit is at work and that the hoped-for outcomes of the gospel are possible. I argue that autonomous and non-cognitive affect produced as collective effervescence increases emotion and heightened levels of emotion, which in turn connect to cognitive processes to render the promises of AG knowledge credible. It is not just the appeal of exciting worship or high intensity that are appealing, but, also, AG participants draw a straight conclusion between the reliability of what is being preached to the relative emotional intensity of the meeting and charisma of the speaker.

Socio-Economic Uplift

Finally, Dalits experience an AG church community that dramatically improves their individual and collective socio-economic status. This happens not through missionaries handing out cash or food, but through a holistic effort of the local church. Converts are not making a conscious political critique but attempting to overcome the real results of marginalization over time.

In following the oral histories of converts, I have asserted that their pre-conversion life was marked by insecurity and social exclusion and that Modi's new India has increased the gap between what they hope for and what they are able to achieve. This is seen in how neo-liberal policies remove employee protections and social security on one side and measures of social inclusion and worthiness are increasingly decided by the individual's ability to consume on the other. In other words, external social forces push *Dalits* into a set of needs that Pentecostalism is equipped to help.

This effort includes psychological benefits of inclusion to a middle class social, and, over time, training in new language, skills, habits, and dress for former slum dwellers who are inhabiting a new middle-class habitus. I follow Mosse (2012) and Tilly (2000) in exploring these new experiences, relationships, beliefs, and values as increasing the chronically poor participants' capacity to aspire. The re-socializing, re-mythologizing, and re-cosmologizing process is solidified in inter-subjective experiences. This is largely because rituals of welcome signal purity, undoing their untouchability and thereby confirming the reality of AG knowledge that first emphasizes the forgiveness of sins and earthly blessings, in addition to demonstrating that the AG highly values escaping oppressive cultural identities. The gospel of the made pure embrace is social embrace and economic opportunity. The result is a change of mindsets toward increased self-value and a focus

toward personal achievement. Participants break out of the cultural boundaries that held them in intergenerational exploitation. Instantaneous social inclusion into a middle-class community and the associated new relationships, beliefs, experiences, and values serve to increase converts' capacity to aspire (Appadurai 1996) in a modern world. Participants also enjoy expanded labour markets, references from their pastor and other congregants to help them get better jobs and school admissions, and an overall social safety net.

Pentecostalism provides an opportunity to participate in new modern realities and to relieve converts from the increasing economic pressures that global capitalism brings. It is then, I would argue, modernization that paves the way for Pentecostal conversion, and not the other way around in the Indian case.

Is this an Ethical Enterprise?

In this study, I have applied the 'free gift' analysis of Derrida (2016) and Laidlaw (2000) and the ethical lenses of Graeber (2000) and Sandel (1998) to analyze how the second exchange (SSF) exposes that the free gift offer of the first exchange (MPE) is really a masking of the final cost. At the first exchange, AG laity and clergy mask the final cost of conversion by emphasizing free gift elements. Hindus initially decide to participate perhaps not accounting for the demands to come. Free grace theologies along with messages of God's inclusive love, forgiveness, cleansing, and promises of blessing are used in the initial offering but then are switched for sanctification theologies and demands for strict ascetic lifestyles, sacrifice, and enduring hardship and suffering even when healing and material blessings are never realized

The exchanges highlighted by this study are often unequal or hierarchical (Graeber 2011). Whether or not the conversion exchanges are unequal or hierarchical, however, is ambiguous depending upon one's core convictions. If you believe that converts gain eternal salvation in addition to the empirical evidence that shows their socio-economic status increases, then the exchange would seem more than fair. However, if you believe that Hindus pay the social price for conversion without these benefits, you would not.

As far as missionaries, when conversions are commoditized, marketed, and traded in exchange for donations, the power dynamic stretches past Indian clergy and missionaries in a commodity chain that is driven by donors in American churches. In this sense, donors dictate and value the product, in this case conversion. When the chain is connected between chronically poor converts and wealthy donors, it is clear that the overall exchange is unequal. Furthermore, missionaries, by selling goods of eternal value, are positioned even over the donor, so that donations become precedent a feature of hierarchical exchange (Greaber 2011). The net result is the altruistic missionary enjoying the benefits associated with being positioned at the top of the AG global social hierarchy.

Given that the chronically poor are lured with ordered paradoxical (carrying competing values) truths that first compel and then trap converts, I question the ethics of these exchanges on the grounds that together they may be coercive (Sandel). Also, given the hardships that converts experience post-baptism and the intimacy of the conversion act, I question the ethics of the further commodification of authentic conversions as SSS in which missionaries benefit financially and socially. To me, this is an example of corruption (Sandel 1998) where commoditization cheapens a sacred and personal act.

Recommendations

I see three areas for further research related to this project. First, it would be helpful to have comparative studies that explore the missionary enterprise on a global scale. While there are a large number of ethnographies of local expressions of Christianity, research with global scope is rare.

Second, there is a lack of research that uses the career missionary as the subject. Specifically, it would be helpful to have a full picture of the roles that missionaries play, including their fundraising activities.

My final recommendation is that Anthropologists who must maintain cultural relativism as a methodological necessity during research move past relativist logics in their critical analysis and engage ethical questions related to religious practice.

Contribution

The multi-sited approach of this study presents a key contribution to anthropological scholarship by exploring the Assemblies of God missionary effort using a global research imaginary. This allowed me to visit multiple sites from the AG headquarters in Springfield MO, USA to local Indian churches in Delhi, and the key training sites in-between. As a result, I have been able to describe the key actors, their roles, and their interdependence as a relational global network. In this process, I have benefited from my position as a former Assembly of God missionary on two fronts. First, my previous knowledge of the network and prior relationships afforded extraordinary access to the subjects which facilitated the inclusion of a broad scope of study. Second, as an insider, I have been attuned to the AG

theological and missiological information as a cultural fact that grounds the values and categories of AG culture.

I have chosen to theorize the relationships I observed as a series of exchanges that represent a global effort to produce converts and market their stories to donors. This approach allowed me to further utilize these observations in tandem with a global network that is both relational and adversarial in nature, is donor-driven in its financial reliance upon American churches, and is operated by missionaries who work with their own set of incentives and strategies. In short, a multi-sited method illuminates how converts in Delhi are produced in socially embedded exchange and how these conversion stories are then commoditized and exchanged for donations in American churches. This study has discussed, analyzed, and revealed the connections that enable this global network to operate (see Figure 3) as a global commodity chain in which the products, actors, and motivations of each are dictated by shared social values and rational processes leading to both cooperation and competition.

In attempting to describe the activities, relationships, and connections that constitute modern Pentecostalism through the Assemblies of God movement in India, this study contributes to the growing field of the Anthropology of Christianity by creating a new paradigm through which the localization of the gospel, the inclusion of mostly low-caste and Hindu converts into a socially and financially beneficial AG community, and the representation of these activities to American churches through missionaries can be understood and appreciated.

Appendix A: Terms in AG Discourse

Hindi Terms	English Meaning
1. Jai Masih Ki	Praise the Lord
2. Pavitra Aatma	Holy Spirit
3. Uddhar Karta	Saviour
4. Uddhar	Salvation
5. Paap/Paapi	Sin/Sinner*
6. Kalvari	Calvary
7. Baptisma	Baptism
8. Kalisya	`Church
9. Vachan/adhyay	Word/Verse/Chapter
10. Aradhana	Worship
11. Chhutkara	Deliverance/Redemption
12. Changai	Healing
13. Samarth	Power
14. Stuti	Praise
15. Daya	Grace
16. Karuna	Mercy
17. Anugraha	Grace
18. Bhet	Offering/Gift
19. Chanda	Offering
20. Mahima	Glory
21. Anya Bhasha	Speaking in Tongues
22. Yehowa	Jehovah
23. Prarthana	Prayer

24. Paswan/Pastor Ji	Pastor
25. Sister Ji	Sister
26. Brother Ji	Brother
27. Srishti	Creation
28. Srishti Kartha	Creator
29. Masiha	Messiah
29. Dhanyawad	Thank you
30. Lahu	Blood
31. Charwaha	Shepherd
32. Bhed	Flock/sheep
33. Shastri	Wise Men
34. Farisi	Pharisee
35. Sadoosi	Sadducee
36. Yajak	High Priest
37. Gadh	Hiding Place
38. Chattan	Rock
39. Bojh	Burden
40. Barkat	Material Blessing
41. Ashish	Blessings
42. Bahutayat	Plenty
43. Shaitan	Demon
44.Swarg Doot	Angel
45. Dusht Atma	Evil Spirit
46. Abhishek	Anoint
47. Smaran	Meditate
48. Anghikar	Confess
49. Apeksha	Hope

Appendix B: Glossary

Agarbatti	Incense sticks
Artha	Material wellbeing
Ashish	Blessings
Asheesh ayange	Blessings will come
Ayah	A housemaid or children's nurse
Barkhat	Material blessings
Bhagat	Follower
Bhakti	Devotion
Brahmin	Priest
Bindi	(From Sanskrit bindu, meaning 'point, drop, dot or small particle') is a red dot worn on the center of the forehead, commonly by Hindu and Jain women
Dalit	Known as 'untouchables' given their 'polluting' essence
Dargah	Shrine
Dharma	Religious duty/behaviour
Dollak	Drum
Hindutva	Religious and political Hindu ideology
Ishtadevata	God of choice
Jadu-tona	Black magic defense of the evil eye
Jati	A social institution of hierarchal ranking of endogamous descent groups
Ji	Term of respect
Kalava	The sacred Hindu thread also called 'mauli' or 'charadu' in Hindi; it is tied by a priest on the wrists of all the people attending the prayer ceremony
Kama	Sensory gratification
Karma	The sum of a person's actions; destiny or fate

Kshatriya	Lords or warriors
Matha tekna	Forehead resting place
Moksha	Salvation or liberation
Pandit-Baba	Scholar-sage
Pandit	Scholar
Prashad	Blessed food
Pucca	Firm or sure
Puja	Worship
Pujari	Priest
Sadhu	Renouncer or monk
Sangh Parivar	Family of political Hindu associations
Sat Guru	Spiritual guide within Vedic tradition
Satsang	Worship service
Shudra	Servants
Sub tik hoenge	Everything will be ok
Tabla	Drum
Tantric	Esoteric practice or religious ritualism
Tilak/tikka	A mark, generally made on the forehead, indicating a person's sectarian affiliation, made by hand or with a metal stamp, using ash from a sacrificial fire, <u>sandalwood</u> paste, <u>turmeric</u>, or cow dung.
Vaishya	Farmers or merchants
Varna	Ranking system

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