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Editor's Note

Once again, it gives me great joy to release the December 2019 (Vol. 4. No. 2) of Nidan. We have continued our theme on Indian Christians. In this issue, we have focused on why Pentecostal Christianity matters in India, we have dug deeper in to the cultural translation of the Bible in the former Portuguese Goa, we have explored how Indian Christianity could entrench itself through inculturation, and how that inculturation could happen through the adoption of the age old Ashram tradition of India. While these issues focus on Christianity in the broader context of Hindu culture, we also focused on the internal issues that matter to the Indian Christian church as a whole. In this regard, we focused on some precursors to ecumenical relations within Indian Christianity. But there are even broader issues that impact on Indian Christians—persistence of caste, the minority religions and the issue of "foreign religions" and the possibilities for Christian-Muslim solidarity in India.

We have also included two book reviews—one on Pentecostalism in India, and the other on the 19th century conversion of Brahmins to Christianity.

I hope these issues will tweak scholarly interest and pursue them further. For now we are proud to initiate a coherent discussion on these ongoing issues that matter to the broader Indian society.

I wish to thank Dr. Deepra Dandekar for her phenomenal hard work in putting these papers together for the 2019 volume. I thank all the authors, peers who reviewed the papers, and all the technical staff who helped publish the journal. Finally, I thank the readers for their continued support for the journal.

P. Pratap Kumar
Editor-in Chief

The Reformative and Indigenous Face of the Indian Pentecostal Movement

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Abstract:

The Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC) is the most significant indigenous Pentecostal movement in India that has attracted scholarly attention. However, there seems to be a gap in exploring the relationship between IPC and the Syrian Christian tradition in Kerala. Therefore, this article attempts to fill that scholarly gap by arguing that the emergence of IPC was a gradual progression of an ongoing ecclesial reformation of the late 18th century among Syrian Christians in Kerala. While the IPC stands as a renewal and radical movement that was next in line for reforming the Syrian Christian Tradition of Kerala (one of the oldest Christian traditions in the world), it was also partly influenced by a historic Syrian consciousness, as native Pentecostal leaders continually insisted on their autonomy and independence from western, missionary leadership. This resulted in IPC becoming the largest indigenous movement in India. The following article presents these arguments by tracing the historical path from a reformative perspective along with a careful analysis of the life of K. E. Abraham. Even though the formation of IPC was a collective effort of numerous national Pentecostal workers, K. E. Abraham (1899-1974) was its chief exponent, who is often closely associated with the organization. Abraham's life echoes the various ecclesial reformative teachings that led to his Pentecostal belief, subsequently prompting him to lead the Pentecostal movement, The Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC) as a renewal, radical and indigenous movement of the Syrian Christian tradition of Kerala.

Key Words: Indian Pentecostal Church of God, Thomas Christianity, Kerala, Indigenous, Reformative, K. E. Abraham, Indian Pentecostalism.

The Ecclesial Reformation of Thomas Christians in Kerala and the Formation of the Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC)

The Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC) is considered the largest indigenous Pentecostal movement in India and its indigenous nature has been a matter of study

for numerous scholars[1] (Bergunder, 2008; Hedlund, 2005a; Pulikottil, 2009; & Abraham, 2000). The emergence of such a movement before India's political independence in the early 20th century prompted scholars to name it "an important expression of 'Christian nationalism'" (Hedlund, 2005a: 217). However, beyond the political standpoint, as one considers the historical consciousness of Kerala[2] Christianity, IPC stands as a culmination of an ongoing ecclesial reformation that took flight among the Thomas Christians of Kerala in the 19th century. This paper examines the historical and theological progressions through a reformative lens[3] and focuses on instances that steered the Thomas Christian tradition towards IPC. In the latter part of this paper, I shall pay closer attention to the life of K. E. Abraham, the founder of IPC, to explore various preceding reformative teachings that brought IPC to its existence as a radical, renewal and indigenous movement among the Kerala Thomas Christians.

The Brief History of Christianity in Kerala: Through a Reformative Lens

Christianity in Kerala claims its origin from the first century (AD 52), when Jesus' disciple, St. Thomas, arrived and preached the gospel to high-caste Brahmins. Although there have been numerous speculations around the veracity of Thomas' arrival,[4] as Kerala historian Sreedhara Menon notes, "the Christians in Kerala continue to attribute to their Church an apostolic origin and call themselves St. Thomas Christians" (Menon, 2008: 44). For the first two hundred years, the Thomas Christians held on to their apostolic succession but fell into "a state of disorder" as they lacked ecclesial direction and leadership (Matthew and Thomas, 2005: 20). However, in 345 B. C. E, a merchant named Thomas Cana arrived from the Persian Empire with four hundred Christians and two Syrian bishops, bringing new life to the dying church. This arrival revived preexisting Thomas Christians providing them an association with the Syrian church and offering them the needed ecclesial direction.

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[1] The term 'indigenous' is used to denote what Lamin Sanneh calls the local "indigenous discovery" (2003:10) of Pentecostal Christianity as opposed to the efforts of any western agency's attempt to give the church in India its Indian face (Hedlund, 2000:2).

[2] Kerala is the contemporary name for the southern tip of India, which is known in early historical documents as Malabar or Malankara. During the late 18th century, it incorporated the princely states of Travancore and Cochin, as well as British Malabar to the north. Most of the reformative efforts that emerged in the 19th and 20th century began among the Syrian Thomas Christians of Travancore and Cochin.

[3], The term 'reformative' is used in this paper to denote the pursuit of indigenous Christians who took on various ecclesial and theological changes in their attempt to unearth the original, old Christianity that finds its origin in the first century.

[4] For more details see, Frykenberg, 2008: 91-114 and Menon, 2008: 42-45.

As the Thomas Christians in Kerala and the Syrian Christians in the Persian Empire held common apostolic patrimony,[5] the Thomas Christians found it easier to integrate with the Syrian church. The local church "harmonized their church discipline with that of the Syrian Church, without looking at it as something foreign" (Perumthottam, 1994: 4). Subsequently, the Kerala Thomas Christians embraced Syrian theology, worship forms, and customs. Syriac became the ecclesiastical language and the local clergy were ordained according to the Syrian Church Tradition, marking the ecclesiastical and liturgical beginning of the Kerala Syrian Christian community. Local Thomas Christians also enjoyed a measure of autonomy in their civil and ecclesiastical aspects as the archdeacon, who was not a foreigner, was essentially in charge of the local community (Mundadan, 2009: 249). This relationship of the Kerala Thomas Christians with the Syrian Church stood unchallenged for centuries, until the arrival of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. During this period the Kerala Syrian Church had taken shape as, in Francis Thonippara's words, "truly an Indian Church rooted in Indian soil" (Thonippara, 2010: 111).

In December 1502, when the Portuguese merchant Vasco Da Gama arrived at the Kerala coast for his second visit, trade doors opened for the Portuguese establishment making the initial interactions between the Portuguese and local Christians cordial (Perumthottam, 1994: 9; Mathew and Thomas, 2005: 30). However, this cordiality began to disappear as the Portuguese intention to take over the local church became apparent (Menon, 2008: 18). Roman Catholic missionaries in Kerala who came with the Portuguese were given instructions to target Syrian Thomas Christians and propagate the Catholic, or 'Latin' way—"To Christianize was to Latinize" (Walls, 2006: 69). As part of their Latinizing campaign, the Catholics used various methods: from establishing a Seminary in 1547 (Mackenzie, 2001: 15) to recruiting Thomas Christians in the Portuguese military service (Menon, 2008: 118). However, Syrian bishops resisted this attempt to replace Syrian ceremonies with Latin, and thus the unrest between the Syrians and the Catholics continued until the death of the Syrian bishop Mar Abraham in 1597.

In the same year, the newly arrived Catholic Archbishop of Goa—Alexis de Menezes "saw to it that no new bishop should arrive in Malabar from Mesopotamia" and set his agenda, "to purify all the Churches from heresy and errors…[by] giving them the pure doctrine of the Catholic faith, taking from them all the heretical books that they possess" (Matthew and Thomas 2005: 32). The vital step towards purification further lay in convoking a Synod at Udayamperur (popularly known as the Synod of Diamper) which lasted for seven days, issuing decrees that made sure that Roman Doctrine and the Pope's supremacy were acknowledged without compromise. Following the Synod, Syrian books were confiscated for correction or total

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[5] Joseph Perumthottam notes, "according to the Chaldean or Seleusian tradition, their (Syrian) Church was founded by Mari, a disciple of Addai, whom Mar Thoma sent to Edessa" (Perumthottam, 1994: 4, footnote 3).

destruction, and all Syrian clergy were instructed in Latin rituals. In summation, Menezes confirmed the process of Latinization by detaching Kerala Thomas Christians from their Syrian heritage that marked the beginning of "the Westernization of the first Indian Christian community" (Fernando and Gispert-Sauch 2004: 78).

Nevertheless, not all Thomas Christians were happy to be subjected to the authority of the Roman Catholics. Consequently, Thomas Christians under the leadership of Archdeacon Thomas wrote to the Nestorian, the Coptic and the Jacobite Patriarchs in Syria, "asking for a bishop to be sent to Malabar" (Mathew and Thomas, 2005: 40). In 1652 a foreign bishop named Mar Ahatalia arrived (Fernando and Gispert-Sauch, 2004: 78 & Mathew and Thomas, 2005: 40), though it is unclear which patriarch was responsible for sending him. However, the Portuguese arrested the bishop at the port and imprisoned him, leading to an insurgency by local Syrian Christians. They gathered outside of a church at Mattancherry in Cochin on January 3rd, 1653 and took an oath on the stone cross against Portuguese and the Roman church. Mackenzie writes:

> Whatever may have been the fate of Ahatalia, The Syrian Christians were infuriated because the Portuguese had intercepted him and they assembled in Matancheri before the Coonen cross and took a solemn oath, renouncing all obedience to Archbishop Garcia… of the whole number of Syrian Christians, computed to amount to two hundred thousand persons, only four hundred remained under Archbishop (Mackenzie, 2011: 27).

The Coonen Cross Resolution resulted in the division of the Syrian Christians, marking "the end of the unity of the Kerala Church" (Menon, 2008: 122). The ones who remained with the Roman Church came to be known as the 'Pazhayakur' (old party), and the ones who maintained their separation from the Roman Church came to be known as the 'Puthenkur' (new party).

In the middle of the 17th century with Portuguese power waning and the emergence of Dutch rule in India, the 'new party' was allowed to reopen correspondence with the Eastern Patriarchs as the Dutch took over ports from the Portuguese. The 'new party,' led by Archdeacon Thomas, wrote to all the Syrian Patriarchs, resulting in the Jacobite Patriarch sending another Bishop to Kerala. In 1664, Mar Gregorios, Bishop of Jerusalem arrived in Malabar, marking the beginning of the Syrian Jacobite church in Kerala. Bishop Mar Gregorios consecrated Archdeacon Thomas as Mar Thoma I that pronounced him as the leader of all Syrian Christians in Kerala.[6] Bishop Mar Thomas I sought to reintroduce oriental customs and reinstated Syriac as the ecclesiastical language. The 'new party' of Syrian Christians, integrated their

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[6] Archdeacon Thomas, who was locally known as Parambil Tumi, assumed leadership of the Syrian Christians from 1653. (Lukose, 2013: 25) However, it was only after the arrival of Bishop Mar Gregorios that he was officially consecrated as Bishop.

ecclesial order with the Syrian Jacobite Church for another century before the arrival of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) from England.

By the 19th century, Kerala Christians had become followers of either the Catholic or Syrian Jacobite forms and proudly held onto their respective versions of historic Syrian Thomas Traditions. Their liturgical rituals became more or less a symbol of their proud historic tradition rather than a representation of their reverence to God. Therefore, when the CMS missionaries arrived with protestant theology, the task at hand was to begin the process of reforming one of the oldest Christian traditions in the world.

In 1816, Thomas Norton arrived as the first CMS missionary to Travancore, which was soon followed by the arrival of the "Travancore Trio"—Benjamin Bailey, Joseph Fenn and Henry Baker (McKee, 2018: 114). While Norton's focus was to work among non-Christians in Kerala, the latter three decided to work among the Syrian Christians (Mathew and Thomas, 2005: 56). Their works mainly involved the newly founded Syrian College in Kottayam that trained Syrian clergy. The Trio was given permission to preach in the Syrian Jacobite Churches, as they made clear that their intentions were "not to establish Anglican congregations in Travancore" (McKee, 2018: 118), but to reform and revive the existing Syrian churches. These objectives were illustrated in Henry Baker's correspondence in the *Missionary Register* of 1829:

> The business of the Society's missionaries is not to pull down the ancient Syrian Church and to build another on some plan of their own out of the materials; our object is to remove the rubbish and to repair the decayed places of the existing Church. We are but advisors and helpers, and instructors to such as are willing to hear (Baker quoted in McKee, 2018: 118).

The Trio, who were influenced by the anti-Roman Catholic attitude of Anglican Evangelicalism, sought to rid it of lingering Roman Catholic practices among Syrian Christians, without causing any ruckus. This approach was due to their supposition that Thomas Christians had departed from the biblical faith. Bailey wrote, regarding the Syrians:

> Their church once flourished with pure evangelical truth; but how is the glory of it departed ... They are now declined into the mere formality of religion, & I fear very little, if anything but the name of Christianity remains amongst them (Bailey quoted in McKee, 2018: 119).

Therefore, further reformation was in the purview of their missionary tasks. Bailey believed the translation of the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* into Malayalam[7] to

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[7] Malayalam is the language spoken in Kerala

be instrumental in bringing the Syrian Christians back to the biblical faith that would be "able to accomplish the abolition of all their Roman Catholic & unscriptural practices" (Bailey quoted in McKee, 2018: 122). However, *the Book of Common Prayer* failed to make an impression among the Syrian Christians. Instead, it was Bailey's translation of the Bible into Malayalam (completed in 1841) that transformed the trajectory of Christianity in Kerala (George, 2001:221).

For a Christian Community that was categorized by traditional ceremonies and annual festivals commemorating the saints, the availability of the Bible in the native language "breathed new life" (George, 2001: 221). For reform-minded indigenous clergy, this was also a moment of realization; to use Lamin Sanneh's words: "no one language had primacy over another and no person might be denied access to God on account of the language he or she spoke" (Sanneh, 2003: 103). As the Bible became readily available in Malayalam, the wave of reformation started spreading strongly among Syrian Christians in Kerala. Soon, two reform-minded groups of Syrian Christians emerged, after breaking away from the Syrian Jacobite ecclesiastical authority. While the smaller part joined the Anglican Church that followed CMS Missionaries, the larger group, as Robert Eric Frykenberg points out, "remained staunchly committed to the ancient Thomas Christian Traditions, (but) still strongly felt the need for internal reforms, both in doctrinal and structural terms" (Frykenberg, 2008: 248). The availability of the Bible in their own vernacular provided impetus to their sense of authority and autonomy in carrying out these reforms.

The larger independent group led by a local Syrian Jacobite cleric, Abraham Malpan (1796-1845) wished to bring the biblical message to locals in their local language. Malpan who was a Syrian Jacobite priest in Maramon and a teacher at the Kottayam College was inspired by the CMS Missionaries and translated the liturgy from Syriac to Malayalam and began celebrating sacred rites in Malayalam as well (Fernando and Gispert-Sauch, 2004: 176). Another cleric named Kaithayil Geevarghese Malpan also joined, and together they "abolished prayers for the dead, the invocation of saints, auricular confession, and … [some elements of] veneration of sacraments" (John, 2018: 93). Their intention was to remove all the non-biblical practices from Christianity and make the biblical Christian message more accessible. As one would expect, the Syrian (Jacobite) church did not approve of this kind of deep reformation. As a result, not only did the Metropolitan excommunicate Abraham Malpan, but also "excommunicated the whole Maramon Parish" (Mathew and Thomas, 2005: 86). Nevertheless, Malpan did not withdraw his reformative efforts that led some to call him the "Martin Luther of the East" (John, 2018: 93).

The relationship between the reformative group and the existing Jacobite church was strained in the following years, resulting in another division of Thomas Christianity. At one end, reform-minded Syrian Christians, popularly known as the 'Reform Party' established themselves as the Mar Thoma Church, while the other

side remained the Jacobite Syrian Church (Mathew and Thomas, 2005: 92). The early days of Mar Thoma church were bursting with reformative fervor as the primacy of reading the Bible became almost routine in Mar Thoma households. And in 1888 the Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association was established on the realization of the biblical evangelistic mandate of the church. Numerous local revival meetings were organized as part of the evangelistic campaign, wherein people sang songs and the local preacher expounded from the Bible. Importantly, these revival meetings propagated the reformation process among Syrian Christians, resulting in the formation of Brethren and Pentecostal churches.

As Stanley John observed,

> although the Mar Thoma Church was born as a renewal movement, many individuals within the church hoped for further reform. Some of its members issued a call for holiness and separation from worldly affairs, an emphasis on adult baptism, and the priesthood of all believers (John, 2018: 97).

Due to an emphasis on separation from worldliness and the assertion of holiness, they came to be known as both the "separatists movement" and "holiness movement" (Pulikottil, 2009: 73), before they joined the Brethren movement (Lukose, 2013: 28). In addition to the availability of the Bible in Malayalam, the furtherance in reforming Syrian Christian traditions by the 'separatists' can be attributed to the ongoing arrival of western protestant missionaries.

On this occasion, it was the arrival of the German Lutheran Missionary, Volbrecht Nagel that contributed to 'separatist' reformative thinking (Saju, 1994: 41). Nagel who had arrived in Kerala in 1893 became convinced of the need to baptize adults—with a baptism by immersion in water, began to advocate for it through his writings and hymns. Nagel influenced both missionaries and the locally reform-minded Mar Thoma clergy. P. E. Mammen, who was a vicar of the Kumbanad Mar Thoma church received the immersion baptism and later become a key leader for the Syrian Brethren movement (Philip, 2000 304). K. V. Simon, who was a noted poet and an active member of the Mar Thoma Church was excommunicated from the church in December 1915 because of his adherence to adult baptism and active preaching against child baptism. And thereafter, Simon became a key person for the establishment of a 'separatist movement' among Syrian Christians in central Travancore, forming a new organization, 'Malankara Viojitha Sabha' (Malankara Separatist church) to bring reform-minded independent churches together (Philip, 2000 304 & Abraham, 2015: 69).

In addition, separatists preached the priesthood of all believers, rejecting the traditional dependence on an ecclesial structure for ordination (John, 2018: 96). They mobilized believers to evangelize without making distinctions between clergy and laity, resulting in the formation of new congregations that called themselves

"'Brothers at Kumbanad,' 'Brothers at Vettiyar,' or 'Brothers at Mulakkuzha'" (Abraham, 2013: 35), based on their geographical location. The separatists also partook the sacraments, especially the 'breaking of the bread' in a simpler manner without any liturgical order (Philip, 2000 302). These reformative teachings "created ripples within the Mar Thoma Church" (George, 2001: 223,224), strengthening the separatists and attracting more Brethren missionaries. E. H. Noel, who arrived in Travancore in 1904, led the movement in the years ahead (Thomas, 1993: 116). However, it was due to the emergence of the 'separatist movement' in the early 20th century, that "the stage was set in Travancore for the Pentecostal movement" (George, 2001: 224).

The Emergence of Kerala Pentecostalism

The origin of Pentecostalism in world Christianity is almost always attributed to the Azusa Revival that took place in 1906 at Azusa Street, United States of America.[8] However, recently some scholars of the Pentecostal movement have rebutted this approach, reconsidering Pentecostalism "mostly from a post-structural or post-colonial perspective" (Suarsana, 2014: 174).[9] Former scholarly suppositions overlooked, as Hedlund puts it, the "earlier Holy Spirit revivals in India" (Hedlund, 2016: 115) led by indigenous Christians.[10] The origin of Kerala Pentecostalism testifies to such overlooked early onset, as the movement did not receive its head start from the Azusa revival, although missionaries from the revival did play a role in its establishment during subsequent years. The earliest record of Pentecostal expressions in Kerala goes back to a time of CMS missionaries in Kerala, confirming historian Gary McGee's words that "Pentecostal and Pentecostal-like movements in India preceded the development of 20th century Pentecostalism in North America and Europe by at least 40 years" (McGee quoted in George, 2001: 220).

Often, local revival meetings contained Pentecostal characteristics such as people speaking in unknown languages, shaking uncontrollably, crying, prophesizing and dreaming in addition to the presence of miracles. Indian Theologian, A.C. George highlights three early revivals in South India—in 1860, 1873, and 1895—that demonstrated such Pentecostal expressions (George, 2001: 221). One of the earliest happened during a series of meetings led by a CMS catechist, John Christian Arulappan in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu. Of the revival, Arulappan wrote,

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[8] Vinson Synan views on this are well summarized in his own words : "directly or indirectly, practically all of the Pentecostal groups in existence can trace their lineage to the Azusa Mission" (1997: 105).
[9] See Anderson, 2007. Also see Anderson 2005;Suarsana, 2014.
[10] Yan Suarsana (2014: 173-196) provides a very thoughtful discussion on Pentecostal historiography from a post-colonial perspective and points out that in some cases western missionary writers (in writing the history) downplayed the role of indigenous leaders who led the revival (without any western influence) in the early stages of the Mukti Revival in Maharashtra.

> [I]n the month of June some of our people praised the Lord by unknown tongues, with their interpretations…. My son and a daughter and three others went to visit their own relations in the three villages who are under the CMS, they also received the Holy Ghost. Some prophecy, some speak by unknown tongues with their interpretations (Arulappan, quoted in John, 2018: 96).

Influenced by Arulappan, Yusthus Joseph (also locally known as Vidhuwan Kutty Achen {1835-1887}) a convert from a Tamil Brahmin family, assumed the leadership of this revival in central Travancore (Kerala) during 1873-1875. Although the revival led by Yusthus Joseph received numerous criticisms due to his apocalyptic prophesies, it played an important role in reorienting the Syrian Christians of Travancore that led to the emergence of the Mar Thoma Church (Saju, 1994: 39, Anderson, 2013: 19-26 & Burgess, 2001: 87). Although, there were no churches denoted as 'Pentecostal' in Kerala until the early 20th century.

In 1909 the arrival of George Berg, an independent American Missionary of German descent, preaching at the Brethren convention marked the turning point for Pentecostalism in Travancore. And as a result, Berg's Pentecostal teachings forced the Brethren church to part ways with him. However, Berg continued his work independently which resulted in influencing an independent 'separatist' fellowship in Thuvayoor (led by Paruthuppara Oommen) to become the first Pentecostal Church in Travancore (Saju, 1994: 49; Bergunder, 2008: 26 and George, 2001: 225). Even though the Thuvayoor church began influencing Pentecostal expansion in Kerala, it did not have the necessary leadership to establish an independent ecclesiastical structure. Pentecostal churches had to wait another decade till K. E. Abraham led the separatists to establish themselves as Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC). One of the notable contributions made by Berg, as A. C. George noted, "was in leading a young Marthomite preacher named Mathai, (Panthalam Mathai) to the Pentecostal experience" (George, 2001: 225), as Mathai became an integral influence for Abraham's Pentecostal beliefs. The life of K. E. Abraham (1899-1974), who is considered the chief strategist of the Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC) (Burgess 2002:778) is an apt case study to analyze the emergence of IPC as next in line to reform the Syrian Christian Tradition. Abraham's life echoes various ecclesial reformative teachings from the Jacobite, Mar Thoma and the separatist churches that were prevalent among the 19th and 20th century Syrian Christians and the successive path forward in establishing the first indigenous Pentecostal movement in India.

K. E. Abraham, his transforming faith and the Indian Pentecostal Church of God

K. E Abraham was born on March 1, 1899, to Jacobite Syrian Christian parents in Chengennur, Travancore. His parents took a special interest in sending Abraham to a Mar Thoma Church Sunday school when he was seven years old. As the Mar Thoma Church had parted ways with the Jacobite church, the decision to send Abraham to the Mar Thoma Sunday school received stringent oppositions from Abraham's extended Syrian Jacobite family. However, this opposition did not deter his parents from their decision, something that enabled Abraham to hear about God's salvation. He later recalled this experience in these words,[11] "it was on one Sunday when my teacher was teaching from the story of God calling Samuel that I felt God's call in my heart. Ever since then, God enabled me to live in His grace" (Abraham, 2015: 39). Throughout his childhood years, Abraham continued his Christian life between the Jacobite and the Mar Thoma Churches.

K. E. Abraham's relationship with the Jacobite Church transformed drastically in 1914 when he dedicated himself to active Christian ministry during a revival meeting led by Muthampackal Sadhu Kochoonju Upadesi (1883-1945). During this gathering, Abraham felt "the power of the Holy Spirit so strongly within him—like someone starting a motor engine" (Abraham, 2015: 48). And since then, his focus shifted from following the set rites and sacraments of the Jacobite church to acquiring biblical knowledge and communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ. The availability of the Bible in Malayalam provided him with an opportunity to pursue biblical studies. For Abraham, these local revival meetings also became integral to his development, as it was during one such meeting that Abraham met K. V. Simon (1883-1944). Simon believed in the importance of adult baptism that was contrary to child baptism prevalent in Jacobite and Mar Thoma Churches (Philip, 2000: 304; Abraham, 2015: 69). Later, based on the teachings of adult baptism, Simon parted ways with the Mar Thoma Church and become one of the pioneers of the 'separatist movement.' Abraham, convinced of the biblical basis of adult baptism and other separatist teachings, was baptized by Simon on February 27, 1916 resulting in his complete separation from the Jacobite and Mar Thoma churches (Abraham, 2015: 58). Abraham, who was a careful reader of the Bible and a genuine seeker, continued his inquiry thereafter, as a member of the separatist movement. Though he was aware of the spread of Pentecostal beliefs in the immediate region, he did not find it worth his while to explore this till after his baptism.

As member of the separatist movement, Abraham had initially attended a few Pentecostal meetings led by the American missionary Robert. F. Cook.[12] In those

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[11] All the Abraham (2015) quotes used in the article are author's own translation.
[12] Cook came to India in 1912 as an independent missionary after hearing from Berg about the great need for evangelism in India. However, Berg was not part of Cook's first trip to Travancore in 1914. Instead, Robert Cumine-- a Tamil speaking Anglo-Indian who was converted to the Pentecostal faith through Berg's influence joined Cook in his early mission days (Bergunder, 2008: 27).

meetings he witnessed numerous people accepting Christianity and being healed miraculously (Abraham, 2015: 226). At the time, however, Abraham was skeptical of Pentecostal beliefs, especially the theological idea of Holy Spirit baptism and of speaking in tongues (Abraham, 2015: 92). However, in April 1922, Abraham had a unique experience while attending a revival meeting with Ommen Mammen and family that made him sympathetic to Pentecostal teachings.
He writes:

> At the end of the meeting she (Mrs. Mammen) started praying in the Spirit, and she began to pray in a different language other than Malayalam. …I opened my eyes in surprise, thinking this might be what is called speaking in tongues. As I saw her face lifted towards the heaven with God's glory shining, I was sure that, no matter whether the speaking of the tongues preached by the Pentecostals be true or false, what I am hearing seems like it is from the Holy Spirit (Abraham, 2015: 93).

After this experience, Abraham met Pandalam Mathai to learn about biblical teachings of Pentecostal expressions. At the end of repeated dialogues and probing, Abraham was convinced "that speaking in tongues is a sign of Holy Spirit baptism" (Abraham, 2015: 94, 95). On Sunday, April 22, 1923, while attending a meeting at C. Manasseh's house Abraham spoke in tongues for the first time (Abraham, 2015: 97). Abraham narrates;

> While we were praying, Bro. Manasseh laid his hands upon my head and prayed. All of a sudden, I experienced the passing of current through my body. By the power of the Spirit, my body began to shiver… I was overwhelmed with joy and began to praise God… My tongue so moved that I was unable to praise God in my mother tongues…following that, I spoke again in tongues" (Abraham, 2015: 96, 97).

Following his Pentecostal experience, Abraham faced immense opposition from his separatist church. Nevertheless, Abraham used this time of hostility to write his book titled "Parishudathma Snannem"[13] [Holy Spirit Baptism] (Abraham, 2015: 99), and by the end of 1923 people from various parts of Travancore approached him, expressing their interest in the Pentecostal teachings of the Holy Spirit and seeking to form new Pentecostal churches. For Abraham, it was time to lead the Syrian Christian Tradition through yet another reformative path; i.e., Pentecostalism.

In 1924, K. E. Abraham officially started a Pentecostal church in his hometown Mulakuzha. The church grew as people began seeing miracles through Abraham's prayers. Abraham also rose to leadership, guiding other Pentecostal churches under a common ecclesiastical body named, 'South Indian Pentecostal Church of God'

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[13] K. E. Abraham, *Parishudathma Snannem*, 1991, K. E. Abraham Foundation: Kumbanad, Kerala.

(SIPC). On April 9, 1926, the first council of SIPC met with 30 pastors in attendance, under the leadership of K. E. Abraham (Abraham, 2015: 159). The two main discussion points were: church growth, and their relationship with the western Pentecostal missionaries. The council held a nationalistic attitude, insisting on the independence of Pentecostal churches from western control as they "believed that the ministry could progress better without foreign missionary domination" (Hedlund, 2005a: 217).

In the 1930s the South Indian Church of God grew massively—even beyond the borders of the state of Kerala, prompting Abraham and the leadership to rename the church 'Indian Pentecostal Church of God' (IPC) removing 'south' from the title, and signifying its expansion in other geographical regions. Hence on December 9th, 1935, the 'Indian Pentecostal Church of God' (IPC) was officially registered in Eluru, Andhra Pradesh (Abraham, 2015: 281). This newly founded organization was completely under indigenous administration. And the Memorandum of Association and Constitution stated, that IPC "is a group of indigenous independent churches established in several parts of India having no foreign mission control but enjoying the spiritual fellowship of all Pentecostal groups of the same doctrine found all over the world" (Burgess, 2002: 779).

IPC, a reformative movement of Syrian Christianity in Kerala?

The decision of leaders like K. E. Abraham to leave the separatist group and form the IPC, upholding Pentecostal beliefs, can be considered the culmination of a decade-long process of reforming the Thomas Christian tradition in central Travancore. From a reformative perspective, IPC stands at the culmination of all these ecclesiastical activities, presenting itself as; a) radical movement of Thomas Christianity, b) a renewal movement that reorients various reformative teachings from other Syrian Traditional churches in light of the Pentecostal teachings and, c) an indigenous Pentecostal movement severing any western administrative leadership.

IPC as a radical movement of Thomas Christianity:

As illustrated in the above discussion, by the end of the 19th century, Kerala had many Christians of the Jacobite, Marthomite and the Brethren (separatists) traditions that claimed its roots to lie in the Syrian Christian tradition. Therefore, as Pentecostal expressions started to emerge among Thomas Christians, it needed yet another historical and theological shift. Kerala Pentecostalism delivered this shift through an explanation that invited Syrian Christians from Kerala to recall their

radical[14] 'Pentecostal' origins of Apostle Thomas' evangelistic ministry, in the first century.

T. S. Abraham, son of K. E. Abraham while writing *A Brief History of the Indian Pentecostal Church of God* (Abraham, 2013), began the narrative by establishing the Pentecostal experience of Apostle Thomas. He writes,

> Apostle Thomas, one of the 12 apostles of Jesus, was one of the 120 that gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem and received the infilling of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost… it is believed that Apostle Thomas came to India in 52 AD… According to tradition, seven churches were planted in Kerala. Without a doubt, we can say that Apostle Thomas being a Pentecostal missionary, all the churches that he started were all Pentecostal churches (Abraham, 2013 24, 25).

The pioneers of Kerala Pentecostalism, especially K. E. Abraham firmly believed that they were going back to the true Traditional origins that rested solely on Apostle Thomas.

The apostolic attributes such as faith living, sacrificial attitude and the presence of the miraculous among Pentecostals enabled the latter in illustrating the IPC as a movement that returned to the original roots of Thomas Christianity. For K. E. Abraham, the 'apostolic faith living' component of the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission (CPM) became inspirational in providing both theological and historical rationale, tracing such principles back to Apostle Thomas. As in the apostolic age, Pentecostals in Kerala also sold possessions and brought money to Abraham in order to serve his evangelistic needs (Saju, 1994: 173). Indigenous leaders sacrificed the comforts of their traditional homes and set out to evangelize, like the first-century disciples of Jesus Christ. As in the apostolic times, the Pentecostals also witnessed miracles of healing and exorcisms. The American Missionary, Robert Cook wrote, "Devils were cast out, the sick were healed. Many came out of darkness, forsaking their idols to worship the living God" (Cook quoted in George, 2001: 235). All such apostolic-like attributes provided a reason for the Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC) to grow as a radical movement of Thomas Christianity.

IPC as a renewal movement of the Syrian Christian tradition:

The majority of early leaders of the Pentecostal movement, especially that of IPC originally belonged to Syrian Christian traditions and carried a Syrian historic consciousness to their Christianity. And similar to K. E. Abraham, most pioneers

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[14] The term 'radical' is used here to denote the fundamental nature of the movement returning to its emergence.

embraced Pentecostal beliefs by leaving their Jacobite, Mar Thoma and separatist churches that upheld Syrian Christian traditions. For instance, P. M. Samuel who later became integral in the formation of IPC was a Jacobite Christian who "received training to become a priest in the Syrian Orthodox seminary" (Pulikottil, 2009: 72). Samuel became convinced of separatist and Pentecostal teachings, and soon parted ways with the Jacobite church to start an independent church. When Abraham began the South Indian Pentecostal Church of God (SIPC), Pastor P. M. Samuel[15] (1903-198I) and his 17 independent churches decided to join Abraham (Saju, 1994: 165).

The leaders of the IPC saw themselves as reformers renewing their old churches, in line with the historic Syrian Christian tradition. Most of them were actively part of their Jacobite, Mar Thoma, separatist, and Brethren churches, when they first encountered Pentecostal Christianity. Pentecostal expressions such as speaking in tongues, prophesizing, dreaming, and a belief in miracles were also common during earlier revivals that had brought forth Mar Thoma and Brethren churches. However, those churches did not provide any sound theological teachings based on such practices; neither did they appreciate such Pentecostal features as normative. As Stanley John noted, "the doctrine of cessation (of miraculous gifts) embraced by the Brethren Church and the reluctance to embrace the spiritual phenomena in the Mar Thoma Church led many who experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit to leave these churches and join the Pentecostal churches" (John, 2018: 106). Pentecostal leaders like K. E. Abraham provided sound biblical teachings on the Holy Spirit baptism that validated the various manifestations of the Spirit. As they began drafting an ecclesiology of IPC, Pentecostal leaders also adopted various reformative teachings from Mar Thoma, separatist, and Brethren churches and reoriented them to a new Pentecostal perspective. Such main teachings were: the primacy of the Bible, separation from worldliness and emphasis on holiness, adult baptism, the apostleship of all believers, and focus on evangelistic mission. In adopting these teachings from other Syrian Traditional churches, the Pentecostal Church was approaching old teachings from Syrian Traditions with renewed perspective.

First, the Biblical emphasis of Pentecostals can be due to the Mar Thoma church's reformative beginning. The availability of the Bible in Malayalam provided authority to indigenous Pentecostal leaders in leading Syrian Thomas Christians towards making Pentecostal experience. K. E. Abraham's writing on the Holy Spirit baptism is immersed in biblical verses to validate the authenticity of such experiences (Abraham, 1991: viii). Thus in contrast to mainline churches that followed liturgies, IPC followed the path of Mar Thoma Church's early reformative days in emphasizing the authority of the Bible. In early days, biblical messages were also proclaimed loudly during revival gatherings, house meetings, and wherever Christians gathered. "The Bible was regarded as the norm for faith and conduct" (George, 2001: 235) to

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[15] P.M. Samuel joined Abraham because of Paul's influence, and became the first president of the Indian Pentecostal Church of God in 1933.

the extent that a "Pentecostal believer could be easily identified by the 'black book' (because of the black leather binding of the Bible) he or she carried" (George, 2001: 235).

Second, 'separation from worldliness' (*verpadu*) can also be attributed to the teachings of separatist groups that emphasized holiness (*visudhi*). One such mark of separation from worldliness was evident in the local practice of women not wearing jewelry or expensive clothing. This Pentecostal stand on jewelry could have been due to local separatist teachings (John, 2018: 106), and their past association with the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission.[16] "In Syrian Christianity, a woman's gold necklace functioned as the symbol of marriage….a woman's adornment with jewelry, especially on her wedding day also displayed the family's social and economic status" (John, 2018: 106). Therefore, Pentecostals, like separatists, felt that it is essential to let go of the use of jewelry as it held a strong connection to 'worldliness' and status. In earlier days, Pentecostals were known for their non-jewelry dogma as pastors refused to baptize and give Holy Communion to those wearing jewelry. This is due to their belief that one could only manifest Pentecostal expressions if they adhered to a lifestyle of holiness.

Third, the practice of adult baptism, as opposed to child baptism, was part of the reformative teachings between the separatist and Brethren movements as they attempted a reform of the church from Jacobite and Mar Thoma traditions. As the majority of early Pentecostal leaders came from the Syrian Traditional churches, where child baptism was instituted, the emphasis on adult baptism by immersion was stressed in correlation to becoming a Christian. In addition, the Pentecostals also emphasized on receiving the Holy Spirit baptism as necessary after the immersion and water baptism. Therefore, special prayer meetings (*Katheerupe Prarthana*) were organized in IPC churches to wait for the Holy Spirit to come.

Finally, the ecclesiastical authority among Pentecostals was also derived after the Brethren teachings of 'apostleship of all believers', where there was no need for a designated bishop to ordain church leaders. Instead, the Holy Spirit was given prime authority in prompting local churches and believers to engage in God's ministry. There is a strong sense of correlation between ecclesiology (theology of the church as a group of all believers called to God's ministry) and missiology (theology of missions holding everyone responsible to evangelize). Believers tried to be witnesses and began conducting open-air meetings to organize various tours to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ (George, 2001: 236). The doctrine of 'apostleship of all believers' also prompted the IPC's work to expand beyond Kerala. For example, Thomas Mathews, who was considered an indigenous pioneer and Pentecostal missionary to Rajasthan, came from an IPC background in Kumband, Kerala (Lukose, 2013: 54, 55).

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[16] Jonas Adelin Jorgensen published a study on the role of jewelry in South Indian Pentecostalism. (Jorgensen, 2012: 518 -534)

IPC as an indigenous Pentecostal movement that severed any Western missionary leadership

There is ambiguity regarding factors that influenced K. E. Abraham and the 'South Indian Pentecostal Church of God' council to reject western missionary leadership during its formation years between 1926 and 1930. Sara Abraham attempts to argue that it was possible for nationalist politics to possibly influence Abraham, since the Malabar (north Travancore) constituted one of the main stations of the independence movement (Abraham, 2000). However, Abraham's writings are unclear about the extent to which Indian nationalist politics in the interwar years influenced his resistance against western leadership.

Nevertheless, the Syrian historic consciousness of Christianity in Kerala has undoubtedly played an important role in Abraham's decision-making process. As Paulson Pulikottil writes,

> 'Syrianness' is evident in various autoethnographic remarks found in …narratives, especially in the autobiography of Pastor K. E. Abraham. He asserts his Syrian Christian identity through the description of his birth, his education, his brother's marriage and of his own (Pulikottil, 2009: 78).

In his autobiography, he also acknowledges that the church's insistence on indigenous leadership was partly due to K. V. Simon's influence[17] and partly from what he identified as the causes of factionalism within the Brethren Church (Abraham, 2015: 109). By then the Brethren church had undergone a split. While one side under the leadership of P. M. Mammen called themselves 'Syrian Brethren'[18] from an indigenous leadership position that upheld Syrian traditions, the other side under the leadership of Missionary E. H. Noel called themselves the 'Open Brethren.'[19] Learning from this factionalism, perhaps, Abraham and the Pentecostal Church council felt it better to establish the Pentecostal movement as indigenous, upholding the Kerala Syrian Thomas Tradition. The tendency of Syrian Tradition or what Paulson Pulikottil termed as "Syrian consciousness" (Pulikottil, 2009: 69-88) undoubtedly influenced Abraham in leading this new reformative movement , resulting in the formation of the 'South Indian Pentecostal Church of God' as the sole Pentecostal body without any western leadership[20] (Anderson, 2014: 161).

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[17] Ironically K. V. Simon changed his position on western missionaries later and became affiliated with the Brethren Church being influenced by J. G. Gregson, a British Baptist Missionary (Simon, 1938: http://www.bethanyaroma.com/bookspage.php?chapter_id=78#page/6 Accessed on October 12th, 2019; 7pm EST).

[18] At present, it is known as 'Indian Brethren.'

[19] K. V. Simon described this faction that occurred in 1921. (Simon, 1938: http://www.bethanyaroma.com/bookspage.php?chapter_id=79#page/2 Accessed on October 12th, 2019; 9 pm EST).

[20] Churches led by Western Pentecostal missionaries—Robert. F. Cook and Mary Weems Chapman (1857-1927) were brought under foreign Pentecostal administrations. Cook's church came under the

Along with Syrian historic consciousness, Abraham's decision to sever relationships with western missionaries was also highly influenced by Paul (also known as Ramakutty) from the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission, who maintained a strong stance on indigenization. Pastor Paul's teachings on 'faith living as in the apostolic age' and trusting God and the local congregation for financial support influenced Abraham and the Pentecostal leaders. As Bergunder points out, "The fact that the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission (CPM) was working without any support from the West" impressed Abraham (Bergunder, 2008: 29). Even though Abraham's association with CPM was short— between 1930 and 33, (Saju, 1994:175), their teachings on the 'independence of the local congregation' and 'apostolic faith living' provided theological encouragement for the indigenization of the Pentecostal Church movement.

However, their pursuit of completely severing the church from western Pentecostal missionaries did not continue beyond an initial attempt. K. E. Abraham and others were soon forced to rely on Swedish missionaries and the Swedish Pentecostal Church for financial support.   Nevertheless, as the Swedish "believed in the independence of the local churches" and were happy to support the Pentecostal movement in Kerala without holding any administrative binding,[21] IPC was able to continue with their indigenous stance. At the same time for IPC leaders, this alliance also provided a reason to point out that they were not 'anti-missionary' but simply believed in the independence of local churches and indigenous leadership.

Conclusion

In this discussion, while tracing the history of Thomas Christianity in Kerala with a reformative lens, I have attempted to argue that IPC's formation was due to the ongoing ecclesial reformation in the nineteenth century among Syrian Christians. The arrival of CMS missionaries and the translation of the Bible in Malayalam were catalytic for the beginning of the reformation process. The laity, who were denied access to biblical teachings (as the Bible was only in Syriac and Latin), were provided access to the godly truth in their own language in the 19th century. Subsequently, the fastidious seekers of biblical truth among Syrian Thomas Christians established different Mar Thoma and the separatist movement churches, an act deemed necessary for the reform of Syrian Christian Traditions. The Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC) was next in line for the reformative fire as K. E. Abraham, and other Pentecostal Syrian Christian leaders found it appropriate to focus on the works of the Holy Spirit, in light of biblical learning.

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leadership of the Church of God in Tennessee, and Mary Chapman's ministry developed to be the first Assemblies of God (AG) church in Kerala.

[21] "History," Indian Pentecostal Church of God, http://ipc.international/history/. Accessed on April 17th, 2019, 10pm EST.

At the same time, their Syrian and Thomas historic consciousness guided the pioneers of IPC to establish this reformative movement as a continuation of other preceding movements. While on the one side, this enabled them to adopt various reformative teachings from other Syrian Traditional churches—namely Mar Thoma, and separatist churches, they enveloped this with a renewed perspective of Pentecostal theology. On the other side, their historic consciousness also led them to stand for autonomy and independence from western missionary leadership, which some Marthomites and separatists attempted to achieve.

Today after the IPC has journeyed for almost a century, establishing itself as the largest indigenous Pentecostal denomination in India, it has also undergone various other transformations. As other preceding Syrian Traditional Churches before it, the IPC has also struggled to remain united, especially after P. J. Thomas separated from the IPC in 1953 (Hedlund, 2005b: 75, 76) and registered a new faction known as the Sharon Fellowship Church (SFC) in 1975.[22] Doctrinally, an over-emphasis on the prohibition on jewelry for 'holiness' sake, accompanied by a certain amount of anti-intellectualism, lack of ecumenical cooperation and lessened concern towards social action invited criticisms, especially from the younger generation of the IPC cadre. Nevertheless, the IPC continues to grow throughout India as a radical, renewed and indigenous movement of the Kerala Syrian Christian Tradition.

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[22] There is ambiguity regarding the reason for this division. While Hedlund describes the cause as an "internal" matter (Hedlund, 2000: 143), Bergunder states that it was "inner-church power struggles" (Bergunder, 2008: 50) that led to P.J Thomas disassociating himself from the IPC. However, both scholars refrain from elaborating the nature of this power struggle.

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"Tell Us This Story from the Beginning": Genre, Dialogue, and Cultural Translation in Thomas Stephens's *Kristapurāṇa*

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Abstract

Missionary compositions from Portuguese Goa have often been read as colonial impositions in which the missionary spoke, and the convert merely listened. The present study is an attempt to locate "dialogue" as a critical aspect of cultural translation in *Kristapurāṇa* (1616), a seventeenth-century retelling of the Bible in the Marathi language. A close reading of select verses from *Kristapurāṇa* is undertaken to unravel the multiple layers of "dialogue" at work in the text. The dialogic nature of *Kristapurāṇa* is twofold: a) the conversational tone and development of the narrative through the question-answer format; and b) a more complex dialogic relationship where texts from diverse traditions such as the biblical and the purāṇic, "speak" to one another. Dialogue as a generic feature of purāṇic tradition, the question answer format of the Church's catechism, and exchanges between missionaries and converts will be analyzed in this study in order to highlight the dialogic nature of cultural translation in *Kristapurāṇa*.

Keywords: *Kristapurana, cultural translation, dialogism, genre and translation, Marathi Christian writing*

Introduction

The neo-converts of Portuguese Goa were rarely passive recipients of the translations created for them by missionaries. They actively "translated back" these texts, bringing out unexplored meanings of the translated work, and in the process, creating a Christian narrative unique to their cultural landscape. Dialogue with locals was also one of the ways in which missionaries negotiated local customs and familiarized themselves with culture. These dialogic voices introduced local social markers such as caste into Stephens's "Christian" text, by compelling the translator to justify his narrative within the framework of local Goan culture.

A more complex dialogism between textual traditions may be found in Stephens's use of purāṇic genre in *Kristapurāṇa*. The use of *ovi* metre, used by Marathi saint-poets, and the use of purāṇic concepts such as "Vaicunttha" to interpret Christian theology are especially significant in this context. The dialogue of the

biblical narrative with local customs and texts composed in the region gives rise to a "creative Christianity" suited to the socio-cultural intricacies of seventeenth century Goa.

This work is also an attempt to bring an early text such as *Kristapurāṇa* into the purview of scholarly discussions on Christianity in India. Select verses from the text have been translated into English to highlight its dialogic nature and the emergence of a distinctly Goan landscape in Stephens's biblical text.

Dialogue in Missionary Writings

Scholarship on Christian writing in the Indian Subcontinent has often focussed on Bible translation, with the eighteenth century as their starting point, with a cursory glance at the ages that have gone before (See, Hooper, 1938; Israel, 2011). The eighteenth century is notable for the first "translation proper" of the Bible into a South Asian language—the Tamil New Testament, published in the year 1715. This was followed by a surge in Bible translation by missionaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, the period of early missionary work by Catholics under the Portuguese regime produced some critical works which are significant in understanding the development of sacred-text translations within the subcontinent. A large volume of orientalist works by Catholic agents of the Portuguese empire were created beginning in the sixteenth century (See, Xavier and Županov, 2015). Catholic missionaries, specifically Jesuits, composed several works in the vernacular languages of their mission fields. Translation of the Bible, however, was not one of the priorities of these early missionaries (Hooper, 1938: 8). Their works were largely Catechisms, involving the lives of saints and other poetic pieces and commentaries that familiarized converts with Church culture. *Kristapurāṇa* (1616) is a rare sighting, in this period, of an attempt to translate the entire biblical narrative into a South Asian language.

While it is clear that these works of Christian literature were composed to aid conversion efforts by missionaries, these texts, because they were not "official" Bible translations, provided spaces for dialogue between the missionary and convert, providing rare insight into the voice of colonized and converted individuals. The present study reads such dialogic relationships into one of the earliest Christian compositions from Portuguese Goa, *Kristapurāṇa*, a poetic retelling of the Christian Bible in the Marathi language.

Father Thomas Stephens S.J. (1549-1619) composed his magnum opus *Kristapurāṇa*, in poetic form, to sanctify Christ as a saviour in the lives of neo-converts in seventeenth century Goa.[1] This text may be read as one of the

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[1] Stephens was born in Bushton in the diocese of Salisbury in Wiltshire, England in the year 1549. After his ordination into the Jesuit order in Rome, he reached Goa in 1579, and lived and worked there until his death in 1619. He is the only Englishman known to be in Portuguese Goa during those times.

earliest retellings of the Bible in a South Asian language and is one of the earliest printed works in South Asia.[2] Stephens retold the story of the Bible in Marathi, in the form of a Purāṇa. This poetic work, in its 10,962 verses, uses the dialogic form of the Purāṇic genre and is also reminiscent of the question-answer format of the early catechisms that were translated into Indian languages. It emerges from a reading of texts such as *Kristapurāṇa* that the convert was hardly the passive recipient of the "translations" of Christian works that were offered to them. I argue that the encounter between the missionary and convert gave rise to a dialogue that had a transformative influence on the texts that missionaries composed in these South Asian regions.

"Dialogue", in this study, is taken to mean both the words exchanged between the characters of the text, as well as moments wherein diverse texts and traditions speak to one another in the process of cultural translation.[3] This introductory section addresses the critical relationship between missionary writing, translation, and dialogue, with specific reference to *Kristapurāṇa*. In the second section, I attempt to highlight conversations between the missionary and convert, and the effect these conversations had on the narrative of the text. The dialogue between listeners and the narrator of *Kristapurāṇa*, the *Padre-guru*, is analysed to understand the progression within narrative and the development of a local Christianity that was unique to seventeenth century Goa. This section will also familiarize readers to the text. The final section of the present study brings out another, deeper layer of dialogue—that between the purāṇic genre, Marathi saint-poetry, and *Kristapurāṇa*. Purāṇic elements which unravel yet another layer of dialogism in the text, involving transactions with the local literary genre. Through these discussions on the Jesuit tradition of literary compositions and the place of "dialogue" in the missionary enterprise, this study attempts to underline the position of *Kristapurāṇa* as a text that lies at the intersection of multiple cultural-literary traditions and constitutes a key text in the fabric of South Asian Christianity.

Kristapurāṇa is divided into two parts: the *Paillem Puranna* (*First Purāṇa*) and the *Dussarem Puranna* (*Second Purāṇa*). The *Paillem Puranna* has thirty-six Avaswaru (cantos) while the *Dussarem Puranna* has fifty-nine Avaswaru. While the *First Puranna* begins with an invocation to the Trinity, the apostles and saints, the remaining sections of the thirty-six Avaswaru contain translations of all major episodes from the Old Testament: creation; the fall of angels; the fall of Adam and Eve; the flood; stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Joseph; slavery in

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[2] A detailed discussion establishing the position of *Kristapurāṇa* as an early translation of the Bible into Marathi may be found in an earlier publication: (George, Annie Rachel, and Arnapurna Rath, 2016: 304-324).

[3] In the "Introduction" to the edited volume *In Dialogue with Classical Indian Traditions: Encounter, Transformation and Interpretation* (2019: Introduction), Brian Black and Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad note that dialogue forms a "recurring and significant component of Indian religious and philosophical literature". This dialogue could be a "a language-loaded encounter between two or more interlocutors whether these interlocutors are people – real or imagined – or texts – either contemporaneous or of different historical periods". The articles in this volume study different aspects of dialogue in various Indian classical texts.

Egypt; the journey to Canaan; the kings and prophets of Israel; the desolation of Jerusalem; captivity in Babylon; Daniel and other prophets of the Old Testament. Christ's birth is foretold time and again throughout the *First Puranna*.

The *Dussarem Puranna* is divided into four parts. The first part deals with the birth and childhood of Christ. This part contains striking passages describing the Virgin Mary and the birth of Christ, among other episodes. The second part also describes the miracles of Christ and his public ministry and a description of the apocalypse and Judgement Day. "Part Three" describes the trial and crucifixion of Christ, while the fourth part deals with the resurrection and ascension of Christ into *Vaicunttha*, where the throne of the Creator is placed.[4]

Kristapurāṇa is composed in a dialogic format, as a discussion between the narrator, *Padre-guru*, who is a priest of the Catholic Church, and the neo-Christians in seventeenth century Goa (*Kristapurāṇa* 1.1.129-146). And dialogue is the key feature that shapes the narrative of the text. For example, a group of neo-Christians requested a priest to give them books written in their own language. The reason for this request was that they had been banned by the Church from reading Hindu literature after being converted to Catholicism:

Ha motta *a*bhiprauo zi mh*a*nne	He said, Sir, this is an important suggestion,
Tumĩ t*a*ri varilĩ maguilĩ purannẽ	Have you not refused us the old Purāṇas?
T*a*ri pratipust*a*quẽ amã car*a*nne	Then why do you not compose Similar books for us?[6]
C*a*issy n*a*c*a*rity tumĩ	

(*Kristapurāṇa,* 1.1.143)[5]

Stephens decided to write for these neo-Christians in the form that they were most familiar with—the purāṇic genre. Brijraj Singh in "The First Englishman in India: Thomas Stephens" (1995), writes about the significance of the purāṇic tradition in the life of neo-converts. He writes that Stephens "versified various stories from the Bible for the pleasure as well as religious instruction of new converts, who may have still felt the spell of the Hindu *Purāṇas*, though by changing their religion, had now rejected the contents of these works" (Singh, 1995: 153). Converts, banned from reading religious texts composed in local languages, still felt the allure of such literary works. And their request for a

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[4] Throughout the narrative of *Kristapurāṇa*, Stephens used the term "*Vaicunttha*" to describe heaven. This is a major decision considering the policy of "untranslatability" when it came to core doctrinal terms. The concept of *Vaicunttha* in *Kristapurāṇa*, and Stephens's balancing act between heresy and accuracy in sacred-text translation is discussed in an earlier study: (George, Annie Rachel, and Arnapurna Rath, 2016: 280-293).

[5] This system of numbering shows the chapter of *Kristapurāṇa* from which the verses are quoted. For instance, the notation '1.1.143' shows that the extract is from the First Puranna, Avaswaru (Canto) one, and verse number one hundred and forty-three.

[6] All translations from Marathi into English are by the author, unless otherwise mentioned.

Purāṇa may be read as an attempt to negotiate the "break" from tradition enforced by the Portuguese administration and necessitated by their conversion to a new religion.

This passage also gives us a rare glimpse into the life of neo-converts in seventeenth century Goa. The restrictions placed by the Inquisitor's office and the Portuguese administration resulted in the production of various sites of tension that forced missionaries to come up with creative ways of negotiating the process of translation facilitating the conversion of Hindus into Catholicism. This is also a significant moment for understanding translation in the colonial context. Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi note that translation was largely uni-directional in the colonial period (Bassnett and Trivedi, 1999: 7), with texts being translated from the languages of the colonies into European languages. While there were translations of works from European languages into Indian languages beginning in the nineteenth century, the translation of texts was largely controlled by colonizers, with texts being translated to strengthen the colonial machinery (Viswanathan, 1988: 86). The demand by the locals of Salsette for a text from the colonizer's language into their own may be viewed as active engagement with their colonized state that attempted to "read" the "other" through translation.

The "translator" is also held to account by listeners in terms of the "authenticity" of his narrative. In Avaswaru 2 of the "*Dussarem Puranna*" of *Kristapurāṇa* for example, listeners intervene in the narrative to ask the *Padre-guru* direct questions about his translation as the narrator, *Padre-guru,* describes a moving scene from heaven, *Vaicunttha*:

Tãua yecu vipru utthila suzannu	Then a wise Brahmin rose up,
Padry sauẽ adharila prusttnu	And questioned the *Padre*,
Mhanne Limbaloquinchẽ vartamana	And said, the news of Limbo
Zẽ sanguitalẽ tuuã	That you told us about
Anny suarguĩ deuadutanthẽ	And the things that the lord of *Vaicunttha*
Zi gostti quely vaincuntthanathẽ	
Ti caissy zannaualy amanthẽ	Told the angels,
Sanguitalẽ cauannẽ	How was it made known to us?
	Who reported it?
Qui tumĩ apule matipracassĩ	
Cauitua srungharu chaddauila cathessi	Or is it that you adorned the story poetically
Aissẽ hoe tari granthassi	With your own imagination?
Caissa ure visuassu	If that is the case
	How can we trust this book?
Vartalẽ nahĩ tẽ vartalẽ mhannatã	
Tẽ lattiquẽ disse aicatã	You say it has happened, when it has not
Cauanna tẽ satia assatia	

Zannize c*a*issẽ	And it sounds false to us,
	How will we know
M*a*g*a* Padri mh*a*nne tẽ aicunu	What is true and what is false?
Tuuã quela b*a*r*a*ua prusttnu	
T*a*ri sang*a*in*a* aica chit*a* deunu	On hearing this the *Padre* said,
Srute tumĩ	You have asked a good question
	I will answer it, listen carefully,
Hẽ am*a*nchẽ ut*a*m*a* xastr*a*	O Listeners
S*a*ruã tthaĩ s*a*ti*a* anny p*a*uitr*a*	
Ya mazi quinchit*a* matr*a*	Our excellent scriptures
L*a*ttiquẽ nahĩ	Are true and holy above all
	There is not a speck
Gentiyanche c*a*uy z*a*isse	Of falsehood in it
Apule gr*a*ntha c*a*rity bh*a*l*a*t*a*isse	
Am*a*ncheni n*a*c*a*rauẽ teyã s*a*rissẽ	The poets of the gentiles
S*a*te xastr*a* mithe hoil*a*	Compose their books waywardly,
	We cannot be like them
Z*a*issẽ amrut*a* gh*a*tta bhituri	And make a true shastra false
Viss*a* n*a*ghalauẽ themba bh*a*ri	
Tennẽ au*a*ghẽ amruta vissa s*a*ry	If in a pot of nectar,
Hoil*a* zanna	A single drop of poison is added
	Know this,
T*a*issy yecadi l*a*ttiquy matu	That all of the nectar will turn into
Miss*a*llitã ya xastra antu	poison
Nass*a*il*a* au*a*gha gr*a*nthu	
Hoila s*a*teassi hanni	If any false idea
	Is mixed in this shastra,
(*Kristapurāṇa,* 2.2.80- 87)	The whole book will be spoilt,
	And truth will be marred

In instances such as the one quoted above, the translator seemed conscious that his translated text had a sacred value attached to it, and that omissions would not be appreciated by either the Church that sanctioned its publication or his listeners. At the same time, it is important to note that Stephens enjoyed power as a translator, free to choose the episodes best suited to his narrative. This process of translation is distinct from the traditional image of translation as a linear movement from the "original"[7] text to the "translated" text. It is a more

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[7] Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi argue in their "Introduction" to *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (1999), that the idea of the original as superior gained currency only with the advent of printing and widespread literacy (Bassnett and Trivedi, 1999: 6). While in the precolonial period, translators were not necessarily burdened with a reverence to the superior "original". However, it is important to note that theories of translation that emerged primarily from Europe used the "original as superior" model in early discourses on translation, which in turn influenced the way the discipline of Translation Studies has evolved.

iterative process, where the target audience of the translated work mediate and contribute to the way in which the work is finally shaped.

In dialogic texts such as *Kristapurāṇa,* the neo-convert no longer remains a powerless voice in the violent encounter of colonial power, indigenous cultural practices and religious conversion, but emerges as clear voice that determines the shape of the narratives composed for them. The linear movement from "original" (missionary) to "translation" (convert), therefore, becomes a complex network wherein dialogues moves in both directions. The missionary teaching the convert to negotiate the landscape of the "new" faith and converts helping the missionary to interpret Christianity for their particular setting, in this case seventeenth century Goa.

Encounter, Confession, and Transformation

During the Portuguese regime of Goa, conversion to Christianity was a largely communal event. There were numerous instances of violent conquests, forced conversions, and desecration of Hindu temples (Disney, 2009: 165, Malshe, 1961: 19, 22, 24). This was also a significant encounter-zone or shatter-zone where missionary met convert. Goan neo-converts who were now members of the Church, were uprooted from their landscape and placed in a religious tradition to which they felt no belonging. It was then the task of missionaries to make "self-conscious Catholics" out of these newly converted individuals (Županov, 2012: 417).

In *Kristapurāṇa*, these converts request the *Padre-guru* to bring the story of Christ "into the languages of this land":

Mhannoni he cathechy vitpati	So, tell us this story from the beginning
Arambĩ sanguize amã prati	
Yeuaddẽ suarga ratna udayalẽ qhity	How it originated
	How this precious heaven-gem
Cauanniye pary	Appeared on earth
Tẽ samagra caraueya srauanna	Our minds are thrilled
Ulassataye amanchẽ mana	To hear it all,
Jesu suamiyachẽ cathana	To listen to the story of Lord Jesus,
Sauistara aicaueya	All of it
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Dessaparinche bhasse caroni	Bring the blessed story of the Lord
Suamicatha punne pauani	Into the languages of this land,
Amã agneananthẽ niropuni	And tell it to us,
Suqhiya quize	Making us joyful

(*Kristapurāṇa,* 1.1.155, 156,161)

While it is clear that the situation in the Portuguese colony was much more complex than the "joyful" tone suggested by the verses quoted above, the demand of neo-converts to know the story from the "beginning" is an attempt to grapple with the new tradition in which they had been placed. This demand for books replaced their lost books, the banned Hindu Purāṇas that brought neo-convert in closer proximity to the figure of the missionary.[8] The dialogue that results out of such cultural encounters gives rise to complex texts such as *Kristapurāṇa* where biblical narratives stand transformed in their meeting with local cultural practices and literary genre.

One way of convincing the locals from Goa about the "truth" of Christianity was to compose literature in the languages of the region. In order to repair the damage made to the Church's reputation by the Goan Inquisition, Provincial Councils were set up in 1575 and 1585 to revisit the Jesuits' approach to conversion. Soon, more "accommodative" methods were devised, and it was decided to create a "compendium of Catechism in the Portuguese language" and then translate it into the vernacular (Malshe, 1961: 24). And Stephens's *Doutrina Christa*, *Kristapurāṇa* and similar works by Jesuits all over the subcontinent were in accordance with these councils.[9] These councils also urged Jesuits to learn the local languages of their regions. And they were provided special schooling in local languages and in the indigenous literature of the region (Županov, 2012: 424, Malshe, 1961: 26). Indigenous texts were translated into Portuguese to facilitate the Jesuits' training, and a large volume of the corpus of texts in the regional vernaculars was printed by the Jesuits.

While the earliest of such texts composed by Jesuits were catechisms and confession manuals, Ines Županov (2012), in her article "I am a Great Sinner: Jesuit Missionary Dialogues in Southern India (Sixteenth Century)" discusses a

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[8] The dialogue in the narrative of the Kristapurana is composed by Stephens in an attempt to convince neo-converts of the truth of Christianity. "Dialogism" as used in this study does not therefore, imply that neo-converts were able to have "equal" conversation with their colonizers and influence their literary works. While conversations in the text are literary compositions by the poet, the dialogues that missionaries had with locals (for learning regional languages, navigating everyday life, and confessions) familiarized Stephens with the socio-cultural realities of the neo-converts and informed Stephens's choice of passages for his retelling of the Bible, influencing dialogues in the text.

[9] There are three known works attributed to Stephens:
   a. *Arte da Lingua Canarim* – A Grammar of the Konkani language written in Portuguese. It is accepted to be the first grammar of the language ever written. It is believed to have first circulated in the hand-written form and was probably used by missionaries attempting to learn Konkani. The grammar was written and used before *Kristapurāṇa* even though it came into print only later. In 1640, Father Diogo Ribeiro S.J. edited it and got it printed at Rachol, Goa.
   b. *Doutrina Christa em Lingua Bramana Canarim* – This was a Konkani translation of the Portuguese catechism written by Padre Marcos Jorge. It was published after Stephens's death, in 1622. This catechism, too, was written and used before *Kristapurāṇa*, but came into print only in 1622.
   c. *Kristapurāṇa*: *Kristapurāṇa* was originally published under the title *Discurso Sobre a Vinda de Jesu Christo Nosso Salvador ao Mundo*. Being translated this means, "Treatise on the coming of Jesus Christ the Redeemer into the World". It was printed in Rachol in the year 1616. Among all of Stephens's works this is considered the *magnum opus*.

Tamil confession manual, the *Confessionairo*, that was published by the Jesuit Henrique Henriques in 1580. This Tamil text was a translation of Marcos Jorge's Portuguese catechism, also known as the "Big Catechism" and Stephens's Konkani catechism is also a translation of the same. In fact, the dialogic nature of Jesuit writing may be studied in two strands: the dictionaries and grammars that were composed (for missionaries) when encountering a new "mission" language for the first time (See, Zwartjes, 2011); and the catechisms and texts detailing religious instruction that was meant for the edification of neo-converts, aiding their journey into the new faith (Županov, 2012: 422).

The struggle for translating the Bible while maintaining a middle path between accommodation and "accuracy" is reflected in the various verses of the *Kristapurāṇa*. The text can therefore be read as a cultural translation, since every biblical episode that was being translated had to be located and justified against the background of local culture and religious practices. The physical violence of the Cuncolim revolt is also mirrored in the metaphorical violence involved in translating the biblical narrative.[10] Local practices had to be refuted, Christian practices had to be upheld, and the neo-converts had to be convinced to accept these as the only "truth". Stephens's cultural translation thus symbolizes the step that came after "conversion" to Catholicism, that of creating "self-conscious Catholics" who were rooted in the doctrines of their new faith. Stephens's intended readership were already members of the Catholic Church. It was an attempt to convert the heart of the locals, to justify to them the truth of the Christian message that Stephens preached. In Avaswaru 8 of the *First Puranna*, readers get a glimpse of the struggles that neo-converts underwent to defend their newly accepted faith (1.8.78, 105). This cultural translation of the Bible was meant to equip them with doctrinal foundation and the knowledge to justify themselves to those locals who had not converted to Catholicism. In order for this, the *Padre-guru* attempted to explain and translate why idol-worship was wrong in the light of each biblical episode (1.8.44-60), and why the interpretation of dreams and witchcraft was to be condemned, why the belief in rebirth ("*yerzari*") and reincarnation was not sound according to the "true" faith (1.5.156), among numerous other practices. Through confessions, priests gained an understanding of the convert's innermost workings of the soul, their dreams, desires, and sins (Zupanov, 2012: 433). Stephens for example, had been hearing

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[10] The Cuncolim Revolt is also referred to as the "Cuncolim Martyrdom" based on whether the event is narrated from the Catholic perspective or the local Hindu perspective. The village of Cuncolim was inhabited by Kshatriyas who rose up in arms against the destruction of their temples by the Portuguese army. On 25 July 1583, five Jesuits and fifteen Christians were killed by the *gauncars* of Cuncolim (Robinson, 1997: 340). The priests killed in Cuncolim were beatified by Pope Leo XIII in the year 1893 (Stephens and Saldanha, 1907: XXXII *footnote*). According to Rowena Robinson, in "Cuncolim: Weaving a Tale of Resistance" (1997), "Cuncolim's revered are its gauncars, who were treacherously killed by the Portuguese for the 'crime' of defending their temples, houses and lands from their destroyers" (Robinson, 1997:340). The event at Cuncolim is significant in understanding the way Christianity, conversion methods, and local traditions interacted and clashed in colonial settings such as Goa It also highlights the role of missionaries like Stephens who seemed to be negotiating a "middle path" in these sites of physical and metaphorical violence.

confessions since the end of sixteenth century.[11] By the time he was composing *Kristapurāṇa*, he knew enough about the challenges locals faced, in their living of a Christian life, weaving this into his text.

Kristapurāṇa also reflects the socio-political conditions of the region that necessitated the formulation of "creative Christianities", where missionaries and translators had to come up with novel ways of overcoming local challenges and approaches towards Christianity. These challenges were multi-layered and complex. And it is mentioned in the text itself that converts often resorted to Hindu religious practices even after accepting Christianity (1.19.53), forcing missionaries to give serious consideration to the "spiritual" and "civil" aspects of life within cross-cultural missions. Often, thus, disparate and clashing cultures had to be reinterpreted within the framework of Catholicism in seventeenth century Salsette. The use of the vernacular by European missionaries was only the "first step" in using native genres and social forms. Joan-Pau Rubies in his work *Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance* (2004) argues that this appropriation had far reaching effects on European Christianity as missionaries were forced to distinguish between Christianity and European civil life (Rubies, 2004: 316, 317). European travellers, specifically missionaries, had to negotiate and decipher what form of Christianity was acceptable to the locals, and which local customs were acceptable within Christianity, thereby resulting in the emergence of a Christian narrative unique to the specific settings of textual composition. [12]

Secret Hindu practices among neo-converts is significant for an understanding of the development of various religious identities in the region. The central importance of these practices is variously articulated and addressed in the *Kristapurāṇa*, specifically in passages where the translator used biblical passages. Cultural translation in Stephens's work is, thus, a two-way process: a) the translated work "speaks to" the local culture in an attempt to Christianize it, while b) the culture speaks to the translation and moulds it into a form unique to the region. In his translation of the biblical story of the Golden Calf, for instance, Stephens uses the opportunity to underline the destructive consequences of worshipping idols. The golden calf made and worshipped by the people of Israel led to their eventual destruction. After describing this episode from the Bible, the *Padre-guru* exhorted his listeners not to worship idols like the biblical Israelites did (1.19.83).

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[11] According to an entry from November 1581 reproduced by Joseph Wicki in *Documenta Indica*, "P. Thomasso Stefano" of "Salsete" heard confessions in the language of the land, "Lingua aryana Konkani", and that his use of the language was excellent (Wicki, 1970: 437).

[12] Often, when a missionary adapted Christian practice, to make it acceptable to the locals, it was opposed by other members of the clergy for departing from European notions of Christianity. This debate reached its climax during the time of de Nobili (Županov, 1999: 34). Although Stephens's work never provoked the polemical debates that de Nobili's life and work attracted, Stephens was already undertaking "*accomodatio*" in his missionary field in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

The text also reveals that neo-converts feared their compatriots who remained Hindus. The *Padre-guru* urges them in the text to not be afraid of them as Christians remained under special and divine protection, with no one being able to harm even a "hair of their heads" (1.8. 111, 112), even though neo-Christians were often branded and looked down on as "*batlele*", or polluted, by other locals (Henn, 2014: 174). Another detail that emerges from the text is how many locals accepted Christianity with the hope of getting material benefits out of it (2.32.49). In these passages, the *Padre-guru* exhorts his listeners that without real devotion (*bhakti*), no one could aspire to receive salvation (2.32.33). The insecurities faced by converts in the context of their regional culture also therefore entered into the text in the process of cultural translation. The Church was portrayed as the ark which would protect converts from the uncertainties of life and transport them safely to the kingdom of God (1.7.128). Cultural translation of the Christian narrative in Goa led to the creation of a new way of expressing and practising Christianity that was specific to the region. The *Kristapurāṇa* is hence, a reflection of these translatorial dilemmas manifested in colonial locations such as Goa.

In their volume *Catholic Orientalism: Portuguese Empire, Indian Knowledge* (2015), Ângela Xavier and Ines Županov argue that the *Estado da India* justified its rule partly through the argument of religious superiority and conversion.[13] For missionaries, the need to understand indigenous knowledge and interpret it for a European audience was necessary in fulfilling their religious calling. The translation of religious texts from the colonies was necessary for gaining knowledge about indigenous religions and for refuting their tenets so that Christianity could be firmly established. Missionary endeavours therefore led to systematic studies of Indian languages and religions. The result of this was a massive corpus of grammars, dictionaries, translated texts, and original compositions in native languages along with administrative documentation of Church activities. Missionaries such as Roberto de Nobili (1577-1656) conducted "experiments" in creative forms of Christianity in order to engage with the intellectual tradition of the Brahmins, who were the missionaries' preferred group for conversion during the period. Rather than preach Christianity as it was practiced in Europe, de Nobili attempted to insert Christianity into the framework of Indian religious thought. The translation of the Christian message into local poetic forms was one of the ways in which missionaries attempted to reinvent Christianity.

In the process, missionaries themselves became 'culturally translated', as is illustrated by the life of Roberto de Nobili. Well-known for his physical transformation into an Indian monk, he dressed like the locals and ate the food eaten by high-caste Brahmins of the region, transforming himself in the process of translating Christianity. De Nobili wore the sacred thread of the twice-born Brahmins and stressed that he was not a "*Parangi* [Portuguese], but a *sannyasi*

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[13] This part of the discussion was previously published as a critical book review in the *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*. (See, George and Rath, 2017).

from Rome, born to a Rajah's family" (Koepping, 2011: 17).[14] De Nobili separated Indian "civility" from "religion" grafting Christian meaning onto indigenous semiotic forms (Mosse, 2012: 32).[15]

The Roman Catholic Church in South Asia, with its patronage from the Portuguese crown, may thus be read as a site of "the intimate connection between production, power and ritual" (Robinson, 1997: 338). The "knowledge" that was produced by imperial agents within the colonies was "recycled" and brought back as imperial knowledge. And the production of knowledge and the routes through which such knowledge travelled was intimately linked to the power of the empire (Xavier and Županov, 2015: 57, 58). In the chapter "Empire and the Village" in their book *Catholic Orientalism*, Xavier and Županov describe ways in which "raw" information was gathered at the village level, in order to be used as "useful knowledge" for the empire. And this information which included land records, lists of temples and their assets, and details gathered from traditional village administration in Portuguese territories like Goa, travelled from the colony (periphery) to the seat of power (center) being processed and sent back to the colony as Portuguese "knowledge."

Transactions that took place among natives and Portuguese agents in these processes were vital in acknowledging the contribution of local Indians to the production of "Portuguese" knowledge. These agents included administrative officials, missionaries, individual travellers and adventurers. Xavier and Županov bring to light existing relationships between natives and these agents in their description of village life as reflected within Portuguese records. The Portuguese created "registers" about village administration and even recorded minutes of meetings and conversations between villagers, enabling readers to get a glimpse of village life during Portuguese rule. According to Xavier and Županov, there are up to a hundred registers for a single village between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, affording rare insight into the development of the relationship between the villagers and their colonizers. Cultural translation was used as one of the most important channels of knowledge production within such colonial endeavours, as the culture of colonies was closely studied, documented and translated into Portuguese in an attempt to feed the smooth functioning of colonial machinery.

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[14] In a work titled *Disputed Missions: Jesuit Experiments and Brahmanical Knowledge in Seventeenth-Century India* (1999), Županov analyses the life and epistolary correspondence of de Nobili as a significant voice located on the borders between the "Orient" and the "Occident."
[15] De Nobili, hailed as the pioneer of enculturation in the Madurai mission, and saw local Tamil culture not as heathen but as a form of "defective Catholicism" (Mosse, 2012: 32). Using this argument, all he had to do was remove the "defective" Hindu meanings and replace them with Christian meanings while retaining the form. This process was mediated by the translation of Christian material into these indigenous forms. Translation, thus, emerges as a major process for enculturation in the Church. De Nobili replaced the Portuguese and Latin words used by Henriques in his Catechism with Tamil and Sanskrit religious terms (Županov, 1999: 79). His translation strategy was at variance with the Jesuit policy of retaining church terms in Portuguese or Latin. The transmission and "reprocessing" of local forms and culture took place through missionary attempts at translation of religious material (Županov, 2012: 415).

Literary compositions by Jesuits in local languages were channels through which both the locals and the Jesuits "reprocessed" their knowledge of each other (Županov, 2012: 415). And dialogue with locals was a primary way in which missionaries negotiated local customs and familiarized themselves with local culture. These interpretations are reflected within the literature composed by missionaries. Županov writes about the dialogic method followed by missionaries in the following manner:

> For the Jesuit missionaries, a dialogue was, first of all, a strategy for acquiring knowledge of geopolitics and geography, of customs and manners, of economy and bioresources, and of religious practices linked closely to the secret internal knowledge of the soul. The presence of these dialogical voices, fragmented as they were, is attested in Jesuit correspondence, where dialogues spring forth, as embedded theatre pieces, from the epistolary narratives. (Županov, 2012: 416)

These voices emerge clearly in the *Kristapurāṇa* because of the inherent spaces that are provided to dialogues within the purāṇic tradition. The "secret internal knowledge" of the soul, which could not be gathered by official administrative procedures, was hence, crucial to the missionary enterprise. Dialogue with local customs and regional literature gave rise to texts such as *Kristapurāṇa* that constantly "speak to" local cultures and is in turn "spoken to" by these cultures. The resultant text is a cultural translation that transforms all the texts and traditions involved in such a dialogue, leading in turn to a "creative Christianity" that was suited to the intricacies of the region within which such texts were being composed. The purāṇic concepts that entered biblical narrative in this creative retelling therefore constitute spaces that provide insight into the manner in which translators such as Stephens negotiated the complex process of the cultural translation of religious texts.

Translation, Dialogue, and Purāṇic Genre

Stephens stated that his composition was a "Purāṇa" in the prose "Introduction" of *Kristapurāṇa* that described the story of Jesus Christ:

> Believers and good Christians, the story of the Lord Jesus Christ the Saviour has been written in this Purāṇa. (Bhauarthiya baraueya Christauano, hea Purannantu Suamiya Jesu Christa Taracachy Catha lihily ahe …). (Stephens and Saldanha, 1907: XCII).

By establishing at the beginning of his work that it was a Purāṇa, Stephens firmly located his work in the literary tradition of Marathi Purāṇas. In addition to the novelty of a Catholic missionary attempting to recreate the entire biblical narrative as a poetic work, the reader is startled by the poet's choice of genre for his epic composition. By choosing to compose the biblical narrative as a Purāṇa, Stephens was making a crucial translatorial decision as, in literary works,

"meaning is derived from the form rather than the content" (Xavier and Županov, 2015: 230). The genre of the composition is as critical as its content.

Stephens's composition led to cultural translation of the Bible, as well as of the purāṇic tradition. And the translatorial movement in the case of *Kristapurāṇa* was not a linear one treating biblical texts as "source text" and purāṇic texts as "target text". As biblical stories were narrated in Marathi, using purāṇic terms, the text translated Christian concepts. And at the same time, biblical stories were interpreted and justified as part of the purāṇic tradition. The mutual transfer and appropriation of sacred concepts that occurred in this process of the cultural translation of genre is significant in understanding cultural translations as a deep-rooted process that led to generic transformation.

While a literary work may be classified into a specific genre based on its content or form, [16] a genre is associated with a set of conventions or stylistic patterns to which a work must internally conform. This aspect of genre is critical in cultural translation, as it is one of those sites through which nuances about cultural transfer may be perceived. The relationship between cultural translation and genre is discussed in depth by Chandrani Chatterjee, in *Translation Reconsidered: Culture, genre and the "Colonial Encounter" in Nineteenth Century Bengal* (2010). Chatterjee views genre as a site for cultural translation (Chatterjee, 2010: 47). while studying the literary scene of nineteenth century Bengal, she discusses the manner in which literary genre such as the sonnet and the novel were appropriated in Bengali literature through translation practices even as other genres such as the epic faced "resistance and rejection" (157). Rather than the "word" or the "content" of the novel, the genre is itself translated into Bengali literature in the nineteenth century:

> It is neither the linguistic/literary text nor the culture only that is translated, but between these two, there is the category of the genre, which has the ability of passing from one language to another much more easily and becomes the site for cultural translation. (Chatterjee, 2010: 158)

Chatterjee notes that literary genres travel from one culture to another through the process of cultural translation. She also states that the power of the colonized lay in accepting, rejecting or modifying these travelling genres to suit their cultural needs: "The process of cultural translation that determined the reception of certain genres and its modifications to suit the cultural needs of the reading

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[16] John Frow writes, in *Genre: the New Critical Idiom* (2006): "Genre … is a set of conventional and highly organized constraints on the production and interpretation of meaning. … Generic structure both enables and restricts meaning and is a basic condition for meaning to take place" (Frow, 2006: 10). Genre is not to be confused with the "properties" of texts. Instead, Frow argues that "Genre is neither a property of (and located 'in') texts, nor a projection of (and located 'in') readers; it exists as a part of the relationship between texts and readers, it has a systematic existence" (Frow, 2006: 102). This means that a single text could participate in more than one "genre" of literature.

public is where the power of the colonized lay" (Chatterjee, 2010: 157).[17] In the context of seventeenth century Goa, the purāṇic tradition was local to the region.[18] And the power of the colonized lay in appropriating and (re)interpreting the biblical narrative through the lens of purāṇic concepts and in its negotiation of their religious conversion in accompaniment to tensions experienced with the Portuguese colonizers.

In cases of holy-text translations, the translator had to make crucial decisions regarding the genre in which the text was to be produced, since she/he could transfer the genre of the source text(s) to the target culture. The other available option was translating texts into a genre that evoked similar "expectations" within the target culture. A translator's decision to use a genre from the target culture may thus, be read as an act of cultural translation, as the content of the source text was adapted to fit the dimensions of a new genre, along with a new language. The text "submitted" to the generic features of a new literary tradition, in order to make it acceptable within the target culture. Stephens submitted to the dialogic tone of the purāṇic genre to make his text acceptable to the neo-converts of Goa.

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[17] Miriam Salama-Carr, in "Translation and the Creation of Genre: The Theatre in Nineteenth Century Egypt" (2006), argues that literary translation is one of the key channels of cultural transfer that leads to the creation of new genre (Salama-Carr, 2006: 314). She points out that the introduction of French plays in Egypt and their translation into Arabic led to modes of adaptation as well as subversion of European source texts. The first phase of this process of translation was a straightforward enactment of European plays in their source language(s) on the Egyptian stage. Eventually these plays began to be translated into Arabic, and "showed varying degrees of adaptation and acculturation" (315). And these plays were "subverted" and integrated into local forms as folk drama and shadow theatre leading to the creation of new genre. The translation of these plays also revealed the tensions between "classical" Arabic and the Egyptian vernacular, which was the preferred language for the translation of these plays (316). As a part of the Arabic renaissance, the European plays "engaged, via translation, with local forms of representation and migrated to a new genre, which contributed to the construction of national identity" (Salama-Carr, 2006: 323).

[18] The conversation in Stephens's poem is between the padre-guru and the Brahmin neo-converts of Goa, who were literate and had access to the Hindu Purāṇas, making it possible for them to locate Stephens's retelling in their worldview of purāṇic sacredness. While the Brahmins were the first targets of missionary conversion in Portuguese Goa, Stephens wanted his text to reach a larger audience. He clarified in his prose introduction to Kristapurāṇa that he had written the text in the Marathi language and mixed it with Konkani in order to make it comprehensible to the local people living in Goa:

> … pannasudha Maratthy madhima locassi nacelle deqhune, hea purannacha phallu bahuta zananssi suphalu hounsi, caequele, maguilea cauesuaranchi bahuteque aughadde utare sanddunu sampucheya cauesuaranchiye ritupramanne anniyeque sompi brahmannanche bhassechi utare tthai tthai missarita carunu cauita sompe quele; (Stephens and Saldanha 1907: XCIII)
> (… but seeing that common people do not understand pure Marathi, and so that the fruits of this Puranna may be enjoyed by many, I have left out many difficult words of the past great poets, and like poets writing in the present, have replaced them with simpler words of the Brahmana language at different places, to make the poem simple).

Stephens clearly mentioned his intention to make the poem simple, for the locals to understand it. Konkani was spoken in Goa, but Marathi was the literary language. Stephens mixed Konkani words with his Marathi, probably with a view to reach a wider audience among those who were not literate and could not understand literary Marathi.

The dialogic nature of texts is a distinctive generic feature of the purāṇic tradition, as purāṇas are often composed in the question-answer format. In a Sanskrit Purāṇa, therefore, dialogue is used to build the narrative:

> The invariable form of the Purāṇas is that of a dialogue, in which some person relates its contents in reply to the inquiries of another. This dialogue is interwoven with others, which are repeated as having been held on other occasions between different individuals, in consequence of similar questions having been asked. The immediate narrator is commonly, though not constantly, Lomaharshaṇa or Romaharshaṇa, the disciple of Vyāsa, who is supposed to communicate what was imparted to him by his preceptor, as he had heard it from some other sage. Vyāsa, as will be seen in the body of the work, is a generic title, meaning an 'arranger' or 'compiler'. (Wilson, 1840: xi)

The *Vishnu Purāṇa*, for example, begins with a dialogue between Maitreya and his teacher, Parāśara, after some verses in adoration to Vishnu:

> OM! GLORY TO VÁSUDEVA. --Victory be to thee, Puńdaríkāksha; adoration be to thee, Víswabhāvana; glory be to thee, Hrishikeśa, Mahāpurusha, and Púrvaja. …
> Maitreya, having saluted him reverentially, thus addressed Parāśara, the excellent sage, the grandson of Vaśishťha, who was versed in traditional history, and the Purāṇas; who was acquainted with the Vedas, and the branches of science dependent upon them; and skilled in law and philosophy; and who had performed the morning rites of devotion. (*Vishnu Purāṇa* 1-3, Wilson, 1840).

Kristapurāṇa, similarly, begins with an invocation to the Trinity and the saints before beginning the dialogue between the *Padre-guru* and neo-converts:

Vo namo visuabharita	Hail omnipresent God
Deua Bapa sarua samaratha	Father God, Almighty
Paramesuara sateuanta	True God
Suarga prathuuichea rachannara	Creator of heaven and earth
Tũ ridhy sidhicha dataru	You are the bestower of virtue and
Crupanidhy carunnacaru	prosperity
Tũ sarua suqhacha sagharu	Fount of grace, compassionate
Adi antu natodde	You, ocean of all joy
	You have no beginning, no end

(*Kristapurāṇa* 1.1.1, 2)

Doutrinicha vellu Sarala	After the time of the doutrina
Taua yecu bramhannu patala	A brahmin stood up
Padry gurussi bolata zahala	

Namascaru carunu	And began speaking to the *Padre-guru*
(*Kristapurāṇa,* 1.1.128)	Saluting him

The dialogic tone of the Purāṇa is also critically connected to its "orality". B.N. Patnaik argues, in *Retelling as Interpretation: An Essay on Sarala Mahabharata* (2013)*,* in the context of the fifteenth century Odiya language text, *Sarala Mahabharata*, that the "oral" nature of purāṇic texts is vital to the way the narrative develops (Patnaik, 2013: 2). In Sarala's case, he was narrating the Mahabharata to an audience who were unlearned in Sanskrit. The question of what to be included and what to be excluded, for Sarala, would have been decided on the basis of how well it could hold the attention of his listeners (Patnaik, 2013: 1-3). This would mean that Sarala's retelling would have some portions and characters developed more than they were in the canonical *Mahabharata*, producing a text which was the Mahabharata, but was new at the same time. The genre of Purāṇa, with its dialogic narrative style, its digressions, and framed stories is shaped by its orality. It is indicated in *Kristapurāṇa* that it was "given" to the people on a Palm Sunday and narrated over the course of subsequent Sundays (*Kristapurāṇa,* 1.1.169).

The dialogue in *Kristapurāṇa* is between the narrator, the *padre-guru,* and his listeners (1.1.128), and is interspersed with conversations between other characters in the story. The text displays the characteristic digressions of Purāṇic texts, and the unfolding of the narrative is determined by listeners who may intervene from time to time, influencing the way the *Padre-guru* developed his narrative. At different points in the narrative, the narrator enters the story and addresses one or more of the characters. In the final chapter of the text, after Christ's resurrection from the dead and ascension back into *Vaicunttha*, the narrator addresses the angels:

Vaicunttha prauessu santã samagamĩ	Christ the Lord enters *Vaicunttha*
Zo caritaye Christu suamy	In the company of the Saints
Tethila vartamana bhodduue ho tumĩ	Oh angels, send us
Niropize amã	News about it from heaven

(*Kristapurāṇa,* 2.59.1)

The narrative voice implores the angels in heaven to describe the victorious entry of Christ into *Vaicunttha* for the benefit of his readers. The Son of God who had come down from *Vaicunttha* to save mankind, had now ascended to his abode having completed his mission on earth. Here, the narrator speaks to the angels in Heaven, while at other places in the Purāṇa he addresses a group of neo-Christians who are his listeners in the narrative. Stephens's Purāṇa has these features in a dialogic format, involving a central narrator and a group of listeners

who question the Purāṇa, interwoven within dialogues with other characters, who appear from time to time in the narrative.

Traditional Purāṇas were disseminated by their recitation or *pathan* by purāṇic scholars (Patnaik, 2013: 27). And the very act of listening to Purāṇas was considered blessed. *Kristapurāṇa* participates in this oral tradition of purāṇic dissemination. In the text the *Padre-guru* urges his listeners to give ear to his narration of the scriptures, and be blessed: So, you listeners/ fill your minds with joy / and listen to these scriptures / you will be blessed (1.5. 153). This aspect draws attention of the reader to early instances of cultural translation that were oral attempts to explicate sacred texts to audiences who had no access to them in their source languages. In *Kristapurāṇa*, Christ himself does the ministry of retelling scriptures (2.19.10). He went about the land of Israel carrying out his task of "shastrakathana", narrating of the scriptures to those who came to listen to him (2.27.114).

In the centuries between 1000 AD and 1500 AD, a large number of regional poets began translating Sanskrit sacred texts into vernacular languages, including Marathi (Pollock, 1998: 45; Das, 2005: 191; Novetzke, 2016: 5). Stephens's *Kristapurāṇa* was located in this tradition of Marathi Purāṇas. Malshe points out that Stephens's inspiration for the purāṇic form comes from his reading of earlier and contemporary Marathi poets, who composed Purāṇas and undertook translations of Sanskrit Purāṇas into Marathi (Malshe, 1961: 404).[19] Stephens himself mentions in his "Introduction" to *Kristapurāṇa* that he was following the style and language of the poets of the region (Stephens and Saldanha, 1907: XCIII).

The influence of Marathi saint poets on Stephens is evident in numerous passages in his work, specifically in passages where a deep devotion and longing for the "divine" is seen, reminiscent of the saint-poetry associated with the Bhakti movement in the region. One such passage is the description of Simeon who waited in the temple to see Christ incarnated:

Ussuassu ghaloni mhanne vello vellã	He sighed and said from time to time,
Suamiya to dinu pauĩ zãualã	Lord, bring that day near,
Cadi teya taraca mazã ddollã Deqhaina mĩ	When the saviour with my eyes, I will see
Zetuquẽ ahe saunssarantu	
Yetuqueacha maza ubagu bahutu	All that is in the world, I am weary of it all, The sweetness of the world,

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[19] S.G Malshe's unpublished doctoral thesis "Father Stiphanschya Khristapuranacha Bhasik aani Vangmayina Abhyasa" (1961), is a voluminous study composed in Marathi and contains a chapter that provides a detailed comparison of *Kristapurāṇa* with other Marathi works that he considered to be inspired by? Stephens's.

Saunssara goddhiuecha suarthu	Is lost to me
Sanddauala maza	To see the saviour of Israel Is the only yearning left in me,
Deqhaueya Israely taracu Manorathu urala tochi yecu Tennẽ aratẽ mi tuza seuacu Uralã saunssarĩ	With that one desire, your servant Lives on in this world

(*Kristapurāṇa,* 2.11. 42-44)

The emptiness of the world and the longing of the devotee-beloved to see the deity is one of the predominant themes within Bhakti saint-literature.[20]

Malshe compiled a detailed comparison of passages from *Kristapurāṇa* with canonical Marathi texts (Malshe, 1961: 424-480). A study of these comparisons reveals similarities in style and language between Stephens and other Marathi poets. Malshe compares *Kristapurāṇa* separately with each of these texts, perhaps with a view to prove that Stephens was leaning heavily on earlier poets for inspiration. In this process, we also learn that all these poets, including Stephens, had several idiomatic usages that appear strikingly similar.[21] The Marathi Purāṇa tradition was thus developing its own distinct identity and register, of which Stephens's *Kristapurāṇa* was part.

Translation as it emerges from a reading of *Kristapurāṇa* is not a one-way process beginning with the colonizer-translator and stopping at the colonized-translated target audience. It is a complex network of transactions where the target audience's interpretation of the translated work is as critical to its form as the translator's interpretation. *Kristapurāṇa* also questions traditional ideas of a single, unmoving "original" text in translation. In *Kristapurāṇa,* the source material is as much the purāṇic tradition as the Christian narrative.

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[20] The following *abhanga* by the Marathi saint-poet Namdev (c.1270-c.1350) echoes similar feelings of love for Vitthala:
> I shall never budge from your feet
> I swear by you, O Lord of Pandhari
> Your name on my lips
> And our interminable constant love shall remain forever
> (From, Paniker, Ayyappa. *Medieval Indian Literature: An Anthology*.   p.501. Trans. Pradeep Gopal Deshpande).

This is an indicative example from the vast corpus that includes Marathi saint-poetry.

[21] The phrase "Ghrute simpila vaisuanaru" (1.12.33) has been used in *Kristapurāṇa* several times to describe anger, which flares like fire when *ghee* is poured into it. This is compared by Malshe to "Zaise ghrute simpila agni" from a Marathi text known as *Mahimchi Bakhar* (c. 1500) (Malshe, 1961: 461). This phrase, however, is commonly used by Marathi poets before and after Stephens to describe anger. Malshe's comparative reading of passages from *Kristapurāṇa* and Marathi Purāṇas is a rich study which reveals the manner in which Marathi Purāṇas were developing their own distinctive style.

For the readers of seventeenth century Goa, one of the reasons for being attracted to *Kristapurāṇa* was the thrill of hearing a new story in a familiar language and style (1.1.141). The inherent affinity of humans for new stories is one of the reasons that continue to draw newer generations of readers to a text such as *Kristapurāṇa*. The "newness" it imparts to the Biblical narrative, the creative ways in which it explores the purāṇic tradition, are all factors that make the text relevant to the study of sacred texts in South Asia.

The complexities of translation of sacred texts in a "microcosmic" setting such as seventeenth century Goa also provides insight into the uses of translation in the contemporary world. A study of sacred-text translation is not merely casting a glance at the ways in which texts travelled. It provides insight into the basic ways in which religions were interpreted and practised. For converts in seventeenth century Goa, as well as for missionaries, cultural translation provided them with the opportunity of discovering spaces in religion that had been hitherto undiscovered. In the process of adapting to a religion that fit a certain cultural context, religion itself became open to study, revealing its possibilities and limits. Here, the translation of the biblical narrative itself becomes a dialogue between Christianity and the cultural practices of Seventeenth century Goa. The Christianity that emerges in *Kristapurāṇa* is hardly a "fixed", European idea imported by colonizers and presented to the neo-converts of Goa. It was a dynamic, creative Christianity which originated from the dialogue between missionary and neo-converts, and from the dialogue between literary traditions in the process of cultural translation.

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The Strengths and Limitations of Bede Griffith's Christian *Advaita* in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

Father Bede Griffiths devoted himself to contemplative life in South India, first at Kurisumala Ashram in Kerala and then at Saccidananda Ashram in Tamil Nadu. He endeavoured to create an authentic Indian theology by constructing a Christian *advaita* and living as a Christian *sannyāsi*. Despite living mostly in a rural Tamil context, Griffiths preferred a pan-Indian approach to inculturation, drawing upon *advaita vedānta* and other Sanskritic traditions rather than the rich, locally available variety of Tamil traditions. As a result, his work has engendered a mixed evaluation in India, ranging from enthusiastic support to stringent criticism. Perhaps the most penetrating criticisms of all was offered by Dalit theology and Tamil contextual theology. Again, Griffiths offered a potentially fruitful variety of Indian Christianity but one that was apparently out of touch with his own local context. In this article I elucidate Griffiths' approach to inculturation, explore why he preferred an *advaitic* approach, highlight the criticism of his approach, and draw attention to his strengths. I aim here, in this article, to determine whether Griffiths provided his field with a useful model of inculturation or Hindu-Christian interaction.

Keywords: Bede Griffiths, inculturation, Christian advaita, contextual theology, Indian Christianity

Griffiths' Life in England and India

Alan Richard Griffiths was born on December 17, 1906 in Walton-on-Thames, England into a middle-class, Church of England family. After abandoning his childhood faith, Griffiths re-embraced Christianity after a series of spiritual experiences, culminating in his entrance into the Roman Catholic Church and the Benedictine Order in 1937. (Griffiths, 1980a: 132ff). Griffiths served as guest master of Prinknash Priory until 1947, when he was appointed Superior of St. Michael's Abbey at Farnborough, one of Prinknash's dependent communities (Du Boulay, 2008: 83-84). In 1951 the Abbot of Prinknash transferred Griffiths to Pluscarden Priory in Scotland, where he served as Master of Studies and Novice Master (Du Boulay, 2008: 93-94).

Before moving to Pluscarden, Griffiths met an Indian Benedictine named Fr. Benedict Alapatt. At this time, Griffiths already appreciated *vedāntic* thought, particularly *Śaṅkara's advaita vedānta.* (Griffiths, 1980a: 171-172). In 1954 Alapatt asked Griffiths to assist with a Benedictine foundation in India following Indian

customs. (Griffiths, 1982b: 7). Griffiths eagerly desired to accept Alapatt's invitation but needed abbatial permission. Initially the Abbot refused Griffiths' request, but Griffiths persisted and finally persuaded him. He sought and received exclaustration (Vatican-granted permission to live away from his monastery) and prepared to travel to India. (Du Boulay, 2008: 103-107).

Griffiths travelled to India in 1955 for the express purpose of establishing a contemplative Benedictine monastery (Griffiths, 1976b: 70). In India he endeavoured to learn from Hindu thought, to find "the other half of his soul," and to rediscover the "contemplative dimension of human existence" (Griffiths, 1982b: 8,10). He and Fr. Alapatt initially sought to establish their foundation near Bangalore; however, they were ultimately prevented by the Papal nuncio in Delhi (Du Boulay, 2008: 113, 118). Time in Bangalore still proved useful for Griffiths; he studied Sanskrit and came to believe that openness towards other religions can foster reciprocal openness (Swindells, 1997: 70-72).

After the initial failure, Griffiths received permission to assist with a different foundation in Kerala, alongside Cistercian monk Francis Mahieu (Du Boulay, 2008: 122). This foundation became Kurisumala Ashram, the "Hill of the Cross," where Griffiths lived from 1958–1968. Kurisumala followed the Cistercian observance of the Benedictine Rule and the Syrian liturgical rite familiar to Catholics in Kerala. Under Eastern Catholic jurisdiction, Kurisumala freely used vernacular language and local customs. At Kurisumala Griffiths first thought of himself as a Christian *sannyāsi* and donned the *kavi,*[1] endeavouring to wed Christian contemplative tradition with the ideal of Hindu *sannyāsa* (Griffiths, 1984: 41ff)*.* However, after witnessing the poverty of India, he recognized that "contemplative life alone is not enough" (Griffiths, 1960: 182). He sought to integrate contemplation and action, participating in the *sarvodaya* movement[2] and in practical farm work alongside local villagers (Griffiths, 1960: 178ff; Du Boulay, 2008: 129). Nevertheless, the ashram still prioritized contemplative prayer, with Griffiths particularly focusing upon his contemplative vocation and interreligious dialogue (Trapnell, 2001: 52).

In 1968 leadership of Saccidananda Ashram (Shantivanam) in Tamil Nadu passed to Kurisumala. French Benedictines Jules Monchanin and Henri Le Saux (Swami Abhishiktananda) initially founded Shantivanam in 1950; however, Monchanin died in 1957 and Abhishiktananda moved to the Himalayas in 1968 (Saccidananda Ashram, *n.d.*: 2-3). Assuming leadership, Francis Mahieu sent Griffiths to oversee Shantivanam alongside two Malayali brothers, Christudas and Amaldas (Du Boulay, 2008: 145). Feeling himself at home in Shantivanam, Griffiths exerted his own influence and restarted his monastic experiment in "a more radical way." (Griffiths, 1982b: 23). While liturgy and common prayer served as the basis of life at Kurisumala, Griffiths prioritized personal prayer and silent meditation at Shantivanam, instituting extended periods of daily mediation not possible under the

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[1] *Kavi* refers to the saffron coloured robes worn by Indian holy men and women.
[2] The *sarvodaya* movement was a social movement associated with Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave which sought the "uplift" or "welfare of all," especially those persons traditionally marginalized in Indian society.

strict Cistercian observance of Kurisumala.

At Shantivanam Griffiths became more involved in interreligious dialogue, both discursively through formal dialogue and existentially as a Christian *sannyāsi*. Shantivanam presented an opportunity to face the "challenge of a genuine religious ecumenism," where each religion learns to "accept and appreciate the truth and holiness" in other religions (Griffiths, 1982b: 23). Griffiths integrated Hindu meditation and yoga into monastic life, used Hindu symbols and texts in prayer services, and established the ashram as a centre for dialogue between Christianity and Hinduism (Swindells, 1997: 75-76; Du Boulay, 2008: 182). Ultimately, Shantivanam provided a Christian base of operations as Griffiths explored the relationship between Christianity and *advaita vedānta* (Collins, 2007: 87-88). Throughout his exploration, Griffiths remained firmly grounded in Christian faith and Benedictine monasticism, always insisting true interreligious dialogue required faithfulness to a particular tradition (Griffiths, 1981: 47).

Griffiths personally affiliated with the Camaldolese Benedictines in 1980 and brought Shantivanam into the Camaldolese congregation in 1982 (Du Boulay, 2008: 187). And Griffiths chose to affiliate with the Camaldolese because he saw himself primarily as a contemplative monk and the Camaldolese prioritize contemplation: "In both hermitage and monastery the monks attend to the contemplative life above all else" (*The Constitutions and Declarations to the Rule of Saint Benedict,* 4). The Camaldolese also hold together the coenobitic (communal) and eremitical (solitary) ways of life, accommodating life as already practiced at Shantivanam (*Constitutions*, 7; Matus, 1993: 28). Du Boulay observes the Camaldolese "welcomed the Shantivanam community warmly and accepted them just as they were, anxious they should not change their way of life" (2008: 188).

Griffiths' Practice of Inculturation: In Search of an Indian Christian Theology

In Griffiths' view, the creation of an authentically Indian Christian theology is a key task for the Indian Church (Griffiths, 1976d: 46-47). Indian Christian theology must take shape in conversation with Hindu thought just as early Christian theology coalesced in conversation with Hebrew, Greek, and Roman thought (Griffiths, 1982b: 11-12). Thus, Griffiths links inculturation directly to interreligious dialogue and theology of religions (Collins, 2007: 85). He illustrates this approach experientially through his *sannyāsic* life at Shantivanam, incorporating Indian spirituality into his Camaldolese Benedictine practice. As he theologizes, he also he draws upon Hindu religious thought, particularly *advaita vedānta*. However, Griffiths' practice of inculturation receives valid criticism from multiple fronts, including conservative Hindus, conservative Christians, and Dalit theologians. How does he respond to these critics? Does he provide an appropriate method of inculturation for a Tamil context? I approach primarily Griffiths' practice of inculturation through the lens of Stephen Bevans' anthropological model of contextualization.

Griffiths and Bevans' Anthropological Model of Contextual Theology

American Roman Catholic theologian Stephen Bevans presents six models of contextual theology to account for different ways of combining scripture, tradition, and context in the theological process. (Bevans, 2002: 5-6, 31). Organized on a spectrum, the six models are: the anthropological model, the transcendental model, the praxis model, the synthetic model, the translation model, and the countercultural model. On one end of the spectrum, the anthropological model prioritizes cultural context and "departs most from traditional theological content." On the other end of the spectrum, the countercultural model primarily challenges "context with the content of scripture and tradition" (Bevans, 2002: 32). Bevans suggests that each theologian naturally aligns with a particular model due to one of two basic theological orientations: a creation-centred orientation or a redemption-centred orientation. The creation-centred orientation maintains "human experience, and so context, is generally good," whereas the redemption-centred orientation maintains "culture and human experience" need "radical transformation" or "total replacement" (Bevans, 2002: 21). The creation-centred approach leads most directly to the anthropological model, while the redemption-centred approach most readily elicits the countercultural or translation model (Bevans, 2002: 32). Here, I focus exclusively on Bevan's anthropological model because it correlates closely with Griffiths' approach to Indian Christian theology.

Bevan's anthropological model presupposes the fundamental goodness of human nature, culture, and context. In light of this basic goodness, God reveals Godself through human culture. Accordingly, the anthropological model seeks God in existing customs, values, rituals, symbols, and religions. As such, it specifically draws insight from interreligious dialogue. Rather than translating the pure essence of the Christian gospel into a cultural situation, the anthropological model begins with human experience. It attends to local questions, interests, and needs rather than foreign concerns. By prioritizing the unique aspects of each cultural context and each corresponding cultural Christianity, it highlights the inescapable cultural conditioning of every gospel expression. While the gospel will challenge culture, it leaves culture largely intact (Bevans, 2002: 56-60).

The anthropological model draws sparingly from other Christian expressions, operating in local thought categories, with local values. It also recognizes the importance of vernacular language for theological formulation (Bevans, 2002: 58; cf. Schreiter, 2015: 33). Relatedly, it prioritizes input from ordinary, local people. The theologian functions in the background as a "reflector," not "an expert who tells the people the best way to express their faith" (Bevans, 2002: 58; cf. Schreiter, 2015: 21). Negatively, the anthropological model may drift into cultural romanticism, clinging to positive aspects of a culture while ignoring negative aspects. It may also statically focus upon a past version of a culture which no longer exists or resonates with the people (Bevans, 2002: 60; cf. Schreiter, 2015: 32-33). In the end, Bevans suggests the anthropological model should not allow present contextual experience to completely eclipse the witness of scripture and tradition (Bevans, 2002: 61).

Griffiths envisions inculturation as "trying to share the whole cultural tradition of a people" (Griffiths, 1981: 44). Following Vatican II, he assumes the inherent value of culture (e.g., Griffiths, 1976c: 485). He finds elements of truth, holiness, and beauty in the rich cultural-religious heritage of India, particularly the "sense of the sacred" and the practice of meditation (Swindells, 1997: 70-71, 114-115; Griffiths, 1981: 45).   These elements, alongside the Hindu scriptures, are imbued with universal value as part of the cosmic revelation (Griffiths, 1983: 17, 110-112). As Hinduism has dominated Indian culture "for at least two thousand years," inculturation in India necessarily takes the form of "Hinduisation" (Griffiths, 1976c: 485). Griffiths also recognizes the cultural conditioning and historical limitations of all religions, including Christianity (Griffiths, 2002: 106; Griffiths, 1992: 75-76). Thus, Griffiths starts with Hindu culture as he interprets the gospel in India, refusing to allow previous Christian articulations to predetermine the meaning of the gospel. Thus, he specifically employs Hindu notions of *saccidānanda* and *puruṣa* in his formulation of Christian *advaita*, while continually maintaining Christ as the touchstone for all Christian expressions (Anandam, 1998: 301; Griffiths, 1983: 8)*.*

Griffiths closely accords with Bevans' anthropological model of contextualization. This model prioritizes cultural identity and regards context as an equally authoritative partner for theological formulation alongside Christian scripture and tradition. (Bevans, 2002: 54-55). Moreover, Griffiths operates with a "creation-oriented" approach to theology, upholding the basic goodness of human experience and leading him to positively appraise Hindu religion and culture (Bevans, 2002: 21; Griffiths, 1982b: 12ff). In turn, he employs the anthropological model to produce an Indian Christian theology. Bevans specifically associates "indigenization" and "inculturation" with this model since it prioritizes indigenous culture within contextual theology (Bevans, 2002: 55; cf. Schreiter, 2015: 5-6). Griffiths prefers using these terms, although he also speaks of "Indianisation" and "Hinduisation" within the specifically Indian context (Griffiths, 1981: 44; Griffiths, 1976c: 485).

Further resonating with the anthropological model, Griffiths uses interreligious dialogue as a source for contextual theology; he couples dialogue and inculturation as complementary practices (Griffiths, 1986: 777-778). In fact, Griffiths' entire written corpus functions as an effort of inculturation via interreligious dialogue. Yet, he does not accept any non-Christian culture wholesale or advocate syncretism. True dialogue guards against syncretism by upholding legitimate differences and religious commitments (Griffiths, 1981: 47). However, Beltramini argues Griffiths' strenuous efforts at inculturation lead him to "accept Hinduism" and affirm "double religious belonging" (2014: 104). Likewise, Du Boulay notes Griffiths periodically demonstrates "an over-romantic attitude" toward Indian culture, allowing positive aspects to occlude the negative (2008: 112).

Griffiths' inculturation manifests concretely in his *sannyāsic* life*.* He wears *kavi* (Griffiths, 1984: 42), integrates *yoga* and meditation into his spirituality (Griffiths, 2002: 137-138), uses Hindu symbols (Griffiths, 1984: 42-43), and follows particular Indian eating habits (Griffiths, 1984: 45; Griffiths, 1981: 43). He also incorporates Hindu scripture and imagery into the prayers at Shantivanam (Griffiths, 1976a: 17; Griffiths, 1964b: 602-603). Indian Roman Catholic scholar Selva Raj argues, for

Griffiths "the adaptation of Hindu symbols and rituals was an external sign of a profoundly interior encounter" (2000: 341). This accords with Griffiths' original purpose in India: the renewal of contemplative, monastic life in conversation with Indian spirituality (Griffiths, 1976b: 70; 1976a: 15-16). First and foremost, Griffiths is a contemplative monk, seeking to experience God through Hindu religious experience, particularly *advaita vedānta*. This subsequently influences the external forms of his Christian life (Griffiths, 1978: 86). While he uses Hindu customs and symbols, he regards "the mystical experience, recorded in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita" as the most important feature of deep inculturation (Griffiths, 1976b: 485).

This prompts a key question: as a practitioner of the anthropological model, does Griffiths relate to the "*correct*" Hindu religion and culture given his rural Tamil context? After all, Shantivanam is located less than 40km from the *Śrīvaiṣṇava* centre of Srirangam where *Rāmānuja* developed his *viśiṣṭādvaita*; he also lives in the heartland of Tamil *Śaivism*. While he calls for a specifically Tamil theology and recognizes the need to relate to local Hinduism, he consistently takes *advaita vedānta* as his primary interlocutor, regarding the *Vedic,* Sanskritic culture as "the most profound" Indian cultural tradition. He senses a specific calling "to understand this Vedic experience and to share it and communicate it" (Griffiths, 1981: 45). Others more adept with Tamil language must "bring out the depth of Tamil theology" (Anandam, 1998: 305; cf. Griffiths, 1981: 44). Much of the criticism of Griffiths' inculturation directly stems from this choice to prioritize Sanskritic culture.

Griffith's Choice of Advaita Vedānta

Despite being surrounded by Tamil expressions of Hinduism, Griffiths prioritizes *advaita vedānta* for three reasons. First and foremost, Griffiths sees *advaita* as a unifying reality in a disintegrating world (Griffiths, 1982b: 22-23). The holistic vision of *advaita* holds everything together, underlining the interrelationship between all things and Ultimate Reality (Griffiths, 1982b: 14-15). Sahajananda notes Griffiths regards *advaita vedānta* as "the point which can bring all great religions together."[3] Similarly, Teasdale claims the unity presupposed within *advaita vedānta* supports Griffiths' overall "method of convergence" (2003: 70). Likewise, Barua highlights the RC propensity to see "vedāntic traditions" as "spiritual locales that resonate with certain dimensions of Christian experience" (Barua, 2016: 524). The search for unity through *advaita vedānta* corresponds directly with Griffiths' monastic vocation and preference for contemplative theology (Teasdale, 2003: 17-18).

Second, Griffiths recognizes the overwhelming cultural influence of *advaita vedānta* in India. He identifies *vedānta* as the widely pervasive "orthodox tradition of Hinduism." (Griffiths, 1973: 2). In particular, *advaita vedānta* provides "the theory of the universe which is most commonly accepted by Hindus today" (Griffiths, 1973: 32). Griffiths' viewpoint corresponds with Samartha's observation that "no emerging theology and christology in India can afford to ignore the power and enduring

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[3] Br. John Martin Sahajananda, interview with author, Shantivanam, January 8, 2018.

influence of *advaita* on the Indian mind" (Samartha, 2015: 107-108.) At the same time, Griffiths acknowledges *Śaṅkara's advaita* philosophy "has little meaning for the ordinary Hindu" (Griffiths, 1972: 1221). Instead, the common person worships a personal God within the *bhakti* tradition (Griffiths, 1995: 5). However, *bhakti* and *advaita* intermingle as evidenced by the *Bhagavad Gītā.*

Third, Griffiths admits his ineptness with the Tamil language. He writes, "I tried to learn Tamil to be able to study the great *saiva* saints like Manikkavasagar, Appar and so on. I had no success" (Anandam, 1998: 305; cf. Rajan, 1989: 245). His failure to learn Tamil reinforces his preference for *vedāntic* concepts, as he primarily interacts with Hindu texts in English or Sanskrit. While he occasionally references Tamil sources, he clearly prioritizes the Sanskritic tradition, regarding Sanskrit as a pan-Indian language. He writes, "Sanskrit has a place in Tamil Nadu. Don't forget that Rāmānuja for instance, being in Trichy, wrote in Sanskrit and not in Tamil. Sanskrit is the cultural language of all India" (Rajan, 1989: 246). While he admits Shantivanam needs a Tamil foundation, he continues to advocate the liturgical and theological use of Sanskrit as the cultural language of India and English as the *lingua franca*.

Criticism of Griffiths' Inculturation Efforts

Griffiths' practice of inculturation receives criticism from conservative Hindus, conservative Christians, and Dalit theologians (Cf. Raj, 2000: 344). Conservative Hindus accuse Griffiths of covert evangelistic activity (Goel, 2010: 403). Conservative Christians accuse Griffiths of capitulating to Hinduism and advocating syncretism (Pereira, 1990: 13-14; Fastiggi and Pereira, 1991: 6). Dalit theologians accuse the wider ashram movement of upholding Brahminical hegemony and Dalit oppression by using *vedāntic* categories in Christian theology (e.g., Clarke, 1998: 41-43; Rajkumar, 2010: 31-40). Here, I look at Griffiths' response to each of these criticisms.

Response to Conservative Hindu Criticism

Griffiths responds to conservative Hindu criticism by admitting that Hindu critics justifiably oppose instrumental inculturation. He too laments the use of inculturation as a means to induce conversion. Instead, he seeks to faithfully live within "the context of the Hindu experience," enriching his Christian faith by assimilating *vedāntic* tradition (Rajan, 1989: 242-243). He cannot fully accept "Hindu beliefs" but he can fully accept "the Hindu experience of God" (Rajan, 1989: 244). This principally materializes in his life as a Christian *sannyāsi* at Shantivanam where he incorporates Hindu spirituality into his Christian practice. Griffiths does not question the appropriateness of borrowing from other religious traditions, overlooking the potential colonialist implications (Raj, 2000: 348). Instead, following Vatican II, he assumes the legitimacy of this practice. The Church must "assimilate all the riches of the nations," absorbing anything which contributes "to proclaiming the glory of God" (Griffiths, 1976d: 46-47). Yet, assimilation is not a one-way process; the

common source of all religions facilitates mutual exchange between religions (Griffiths, 1982b: 12).

Griffiths believes his respect for Hindu experience alongside his rejection of instrumental inculturation should allay Hindu criticism (cf. Klostermaier, 2003: 5; Goel, 1990: 391-392). However, Goel still insists Griffiths intends to "undo Hinduism" (Goel, 1990: 392). To the contrary, Griffiths exhorts Christians to work *with* Hindus in order to *preserve* Hindu religion and culture (Griffiths, 1976c: 485). Nevertheless, Klostermaier faults Griffiths for failing to cultivate ties with a specific Hindu *sampradāya* and not seeking Hindu permission for his inculturation efforts (2003: 8; cf. Cornille, 1991: 145). Klostermaier suggests future Christian inculturation should "follow Hindu conventions and get the Hindus' agreement" (2003: 9). However, despite virulent response from conservative Hindus, Raj notes the overall Hindu reception of Griffiths is more varied. (2000: 345; cf. Collins, 2007: 155-156). For example, Tamil Jesuit theologian Michael Amaladoss recalls positive experiences of Hindu-Christian dialogue with Griffiths at Shantivanam (Amaladoss, 2011: 102), while K.D. Sethna, a follower of Sri Aurobindo, maintained a friendly correspondence with Griffiths for several years (2004).

Response to Conservative Christian Criticism

In response to conservative Christian critics, Griffiths maintains inculturation in India necessarily takes the form of Hinduization "because Indian culture is largely Hindu" (Rajan, 1989: 243). The Church inculturates and incarnates the gospel in India by taking Hindu religion seriously, conversing with and borrowing from Hindu thought. Griffiths suggests many Indian Catholics find this difficult because they have been conditioned to think of Hinduism as "superstitious and idolatrous." However, *Nostra Aetate* 2 positively recognizes the "moral and spiritual values" of Hinduism (Griffiths, 1976c: 485). Griffiths steadfastly follows the Vatican II directives, insisting the Church must "absorb all the riches of wisdom and knowledge, which come down to us in the great tradition of Indian culture and philosophy, and bring it to perfection in Christ." Similarly, he notes that Shantivanam uses a Vatican-approved Eucharistic rite (Griffiths, 1976d: 47-48).

In particular, Griffiths responds to Pereira's accusation of syncretism (Pereira, 1990: 12; Fastiggi and Pereira, 1991: 6). Griffiths regards himself as "a Christian who is Hindu in spirit" just as Gandhi is "a Hindu who is Christian in spirit." He adheres to Christianity but interprets the gospel "with spiritual understanding derived from the Hindu tradition." Again, Griffiths claims to follow Vatican II. Contra Pereira, Griffiths does not advocate a Hindu-Christian syncretism. Instead, he observes analogies between Christianity and Hinduism, refusing to equate Christian and Hindu doctrines.[4] Trapnell validates Griffiths self-assessment, writing, "Griffiths does not 'identify' or equate the symbols of Hinduism and Christianity but rather seeks to discern and articulate their analogical character as symbols of the one divine mystery;" in inculturation, Griffiths respects "religious differences" and seeks

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[4] Bede Griffiths, Letter to Jose Pereira, July 9, 1991.

"common ground" (Trapnell, 2001: 118).

Griffiths also finds support for inculturation within the nature of Benedictine monasticism. As members of an autonomous federation, Benedictine monasteries maintain the freedom to follow the Benedictine Rule in accordance with local customs (Griffiths, 1982a: 149). Thus, a Benedictine monastery in India appears thoroughly Indian, as a local community following local culture. At Shantivanam, Griffiths specifically endeavours to connect the Benedictine tradition to the wider Indian monastic tradition (Griffiths, 1982a: 150). He assured Vatican approval of his efforts by affiliating Shantivanam with the Camaldolese Benedictine order (Cornille, 1991: 136).

Response to Dalit Christian Criticism

Indian Christian theology is divided between Dalit theology and "classical" Brahminical-influenced theology. Approaching the divide positively, Wilfred sees two competing impulses: an impulse towards socio-political liberation or towards spiritual liberation. (Wilfred, 2005: 105; cf. Kuttianimattathil, 2012: 516-517). However, more negatively, "advaitic theologies are considered anti-Dalit, and Dalit theology is considered anti-Brahminic" (Tennent, 1997: 343). In Dalit perspective, classical Indian Christian theology wrongfully employs "symbols of their enslavement, poverty and rejection" (Collins, 2007: 92). This Dalit critique extends particularly to the ashram movement (Collins, 2007: 82-83). As a result, Barnes writes, "theologians have become painfully conscious that ashramic spirituality addresses only the Sanskritic culture of the higher castes" (Barnes, 2001: 67; cf. Kuttianimattathil, 1998: 503-509). While Griffiths may have been aware of Dalit critique, he does not seem particularly concerned to address it. Similarly, Dalit critics seemingly do not single out Griffiths. Yet, there remains a sense that he promotes "cultural elitism" by favouring Brahminical thought over popular culture (Du Boulay, 2008: 210).

Dalit theologians regard classical Indian Christian theology as captive to the upper castes. Clarke considers it "an ideological vehicle in the hands of the status quo," while Rajkumar contends it is oblivious to the Dalit Christian majority and is thereby "alienated from the reality of Indian Christianity" (Clarke, 1998: 41; Rajkumar, 2012: 35-36). In general, Dalit theologians react negatively toward theology reliant upon Brahminical sources which perpetuate caste oppression (Wilfred, 2005: 121). At the same time, Rajkumar recognizes the inevitability of this practice amongst caste-Christian interpreters; they understandably seek to articulate a theology that makes sense of their cultural heritage (Rajkumar, 2012: 36). Nevertheless, Soares-Prabhu argues Indian Christian theology must primarily attend to Dalit concerns in light of the "highly oppressive" and "quite unrepentant" nature of Brahminical Hinduism (1993: 153). According to Soares-Prabhu, ashramite Christianity focuses too much upon emulating "the source of grave social evils" in India to adequately address Dalit concerns (1993: 155-155). Relatedly, Swamy notes official Hindu-Christian dialogue typically regards Brahminical Hinduism as the authoritative expression of Hinduism and largely ignores all Dalit voices (2016: 99).

Christian theology must account for the lived experience of its adherents (Bevans, 2002: 5-7). Thus, non-Dalit theologians like Wilfred and Amaladoss recognize the necessity of highlighting Dalit voices for Indian Christian theology (Wilfred, 2005: 134-137; Amaladoss, 1998: 66). For theology "to be faithful to life," it must emerge "from the experience of the suffering millions of India" (Wilfred, 2005: 7) Therefore, Wilfred suggests a convergence between the two basic impulses mentioned above; Indian theology begins with "the urgent task of socio-political liberation" but also draws upon "motifs from the traditional Indian spirituality represented by the *ashram* ideal" (Wilfred, 2005: 105). In like manner, Samartha recognizes the importance of Dalit theology but claims, "to ignore *advaita* and its enduring influence on the life and thought of people is the easiest way to commit theological suicide" (Samartha, 2015: 107-108).

Griffiths addresses these concerns indirectly by pointing to the inseparability of contemplation and action. Meditation and contemplation lead to social awareness and social action (Griffiths, 1992: 92). He writes, "unless we find Christ within, we will not find him among the poor, though we may be doing good to them in various ways. The two are reciprocal: the more we find Christ within, the more we become aware of Christ without" (Griffiths, 1992: 93). He also acknowledges a universal "Christian duty to the poor," paraphrasing Jesus' words: "I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me to drink, naked and you clothed me" (Griffiths, 1960: 182; cf. Gospel of Matthew, 25:35-36). He genuinely believes contemplative monastic life, including voluntary poverty, leads to solidarity with the poor and facilitates social/political awareness (Griffiths, 1981: 50). He ultimately regards this solidarity as "the main theme" in India today (Griffiths, 1981: 45).

Griffiths regards love as "a dynamic force" which sends Christians "out to serve, to work, and to do whatever God wants." For some this means living the eremitical life, for others it means social work in a slum. Both are driven by *agape*, "the love which is God himself in Christ" (Griffiths, 1995: 94-95). The *Gītā* also advocates the complementarity of contemplation and action, calling people "to live in the world, to serve, and at the same time to be one with God, having the inner peace" (Griffiths 1995: 83). While Shantivanam primarily aims to facilitate contemplative life, under Griffiths' care the ashram demonstrated social concern by operating a dispensary, establishing two nursery schools, and sharing farmland with a Dalit village (Griffiths 1976a: 18). Griffiths also envisioned sending brothers from the community to serve in places of extreme poverty, exhorting fellow Benedictines in India, "we should not give the impression that a monastery is only a place of peace and quiet, not concerned with the problems of the world" (Griffiths, 1980b: 435.)

However, Griffiths unequivocally prioritizes contemplative spirituality. He writes, we "share in the concerns of our neighbours, but we have to keep constantly in mind that what people need more than food, clothing or medicine or education is the knowledge of God" (Griffiths, 1976a: 18). Addressing poverty is important; encouraging the knowledge of God is *more* important. Griffiths also fears too much activity causes one to lose sight of God (Griffiths, 1995: 95). Thus, at Kurisumala he proposed that oblates could perform the required social work, freeing the professed monks to attend to prayer and the spiritual needs of their neighbours

(Griffiths, 1960: 182). Relatedly, Griffiths focuses his theological attention upon *advaita vedānta* rather than Dalit liberation. Inculturation begins with classical Hindu thought or *advaitic* experience, not the lived experience of oppressed peoples. Even so, Du Boulay concludes, "even if the accusation of elitism stands, it never led him to fail in compassion or love" (2008: 211).

Additionally, Griffiths' references to caste are ambivalent. For example, he appears sympathetic towards *varṇa* as a social system, relating it to the feudal system of medieval Europe (Griffiths, 1995: 58, 312-313). *Varṇa* orders society in a system of priests, warriors, statesmen, merchants, farmers, and workers and "it is not degrading to be a worker" (Griffiths, 1995: 72, 313). This reflects Griffiths' theology of work, wherein "every form of work, especially everything connected with the round of agriculture… is part of a sacramental mystery" which renews human life. Every type of work is sacred, as "there is nothing which is not holy" (Griffiths, 1980a: 152). Work should be done "for God," following the divine will; difficulty indicates the worker shares "in the labour and the suffering of Christ" (Griffiths, 1980a: 154). However, Griffiths recognizes systems of labour are prone to abuse, especially industrialism. Yet, abuses come from the failure to recognize the sacredness of all work, rather than the system itself. Thus, Griffiths follows the call of Gandhi to strengthen the Indian village system in the face of Westernization (Griffiths, 1984: 121-125). Additionally, he contends Indian villagers are "comparatively happy" in their plight, ascribing this to their acceptance of *dharma* (Griffiths, 1995: 315).

In commentary on *Gītā* 18:41, Griffiths equates *varṇa* with "class" or "colour," rather than "caste," implicitly differentiating *varṇa* and *jāti* (Griffiths, 1995: 312-313). He connects *varṇa* directly with skin colour via the Aryan migration theory. Light-skinned Aryans comprise the three higher groups (*brahmins, kṣatriyas,* and *vaiśyas*), while dark-skinned Dravidians comprise the *śūdras,* or "workers." Again, he regards *varṇa* as an innocuous ordering of society, glossing the blatant racism of a class system based upon skin colour.[5] He contends the system has a sound basis but may be problematic as practiced, echoing Gandhi who sees *varṇa* as an essential system of social ordering like any other (Prabhu and Rao, [1967?]: 147-150). Griffiths largely fails to recognize or reckon with the unquestionably hierarchical, oppressive nature of caste (Cf. Johnson, 2009: 80-81). However, at other times Griffiths appears more negative regarding caste. For example, he recognizes the "unfortunate" persistence of caste influence in Indian villages, particularly drawing attention to the plight of the "*harijans…*who live apart from the rest and cannot even share the same well" (Griffiths, 1984: 118). He also acknowledges "danger" within the caste system which "can lead to great abuses." However, Griffiths seemingly does not voice any sustained criticism of caste. Instead, he simply advocates maintaining the "general order of society" in a more fluid system than the "old hereditary" system (Griffiths, 1995: 316).

Despite Griffiths' ambivalence, Collins argues the "value base" of the ashram movement "does not inevitably endorse or perpetuate the values of the caste system" (2007: 82-83). Collins' assessment resonates with Griffiths' view of the

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[5] Neither these verses nor Griffiths mention the *avarṇa.*

integral nature of humanity (Griffiths, 2002: 30-31), his emphasis on loving others (Griffiths, 1976a: 18), the unconditional welcome offered at Shantivanam (Swindells, 1997: 79), and Shantivanam's work with neighbouring Dalit villages (Griffiths, 1976a: 18). Likewise, Cornille highlights the egalitarian nature of RC ashrams, including the abolition of "all caste distinctions" (1991: 186). While the ashram movement may appear to favour one particular community, they hope to articulate a contemplative vision in solidarity with those called to prioritize social concern; both groups "need the respect, support and input of the other." (Grant, 1993: 158-159). Additionally, Rajan suggests the *sannyāsic* life elicits participation in the "struggle for liberation from systems, structures and conditions which consolidate and perpetuate underdevelopment, unfreedom and alienation" in India (1989: 184-185). Finally, Kuttianimattathil contends all "oppressive and anti-human" elements of Brahminical tradition must be "denounced and rejected" but the elements of liberation which appear within *advaita vedānta* should be harnessed and celebrated (1998: 509). Griffiths would certainly echo this sentiment, as he maintains "each religion has its limitations and defects" that must be overcome (Griffiths, 1983: 26).

Remaining Questions and Criticism for Griffiths' Inculturation

Griffiths' practice of inculturation is open to criticism on a further front, closely related to the Dalit critique. Clooney observes, "in Tamil Nadu some Christian communities' evidence great animosity toward the Brahminical traditions and, consequently, resist the very idea of a Christian study of Vedanta" (Clooney, 2016: 40). However, this is precisely what Griffiths provides. He demonstrates awareness of Tamil tradition, mentioning *Śaiva Siddhānta, Tirukkuṟaḷ,* and *Māṇikkavācakar,* but unequivocally prioritizes the Sanskritic *vedāntic* tradition, particularly *advaita vedānta* (Cf. Griffiths, 1995: 196; Griffiths, 1964a: 13). In this way, he *ignores* his context. Rajan and Anandam directly confront Griffiths on this point. Rajan implores Griffiths to take Tamil language and culture more seriously, claiming "Sanskrit is unintelligible to the Tamil mind and Tamil is no less important and sacred than Sanskrit" (1989: 245). Similarly, Anandam suggests Griffiths' prioritization of *advaita* demonstrates a failure to take local context seriously (1998: 305).

Griffiths responds to these challenges similarly. As noted above, Griffiths acknowledges his limitations as a non-Tamil speaker. He admits *advaita vedānta* is only one possible interlocutor for Indian Christian theology. He recognizes the significant contribution of Tamil thought, suggesting it must play a larger role at Shantivanam. However, deep interaction with Tamil sources is beyond the scope of his abilities; Tamils must take the lead in Tamil inculturation and theologizing (Anandam, 1998: 305-306; Rajan, 1989: 245-246). Griffiths also contends Sanskrit has a valid place in Tamil Nadu as "the cultural language of all India" (Rajan, 1989: 246). His response raises further questions. If "Tamil ought to be much more fundamental" at Shantivanam and Griffiths is inept at Tamil, why not cede leadership to Tamils (Rajan, 1989: 245)? How effectively can Griffiths expect to inculturate Christianity without speaking the local language? Does Griffiths' Christian *advaita* make more sense elsewhere in India? Or, since *advaita vedānta*

pervades India, does Griffiths' Christian *advaita* fit in Tamil Nadu?

Jeyaraj demonstrates that "inculturation requires adjustment to the norms of a particular local community with its specific socio-historical backgrounds, selective memories and loyalties, emotions and customs" (Jeyaraj, 2016: 185).   While Griffiths does take on certain Indian customs associated with *sannyāsa* and ashram spirituality and borrows from Indian thought, he does not take on specifically Tamil customs or practices, most notably the Tamil language. As Jeyaraj argues, "inculturation begins with the language" (Jeyaraj, 2016: 184; cf. 189).   Thus, Griffiths failure to learn Tamil severely limits his ability to craft an inculturated Tamil theology, as he lacks the ability to interact with and understand Tamil thought at its deepest level.   He also fails to demonstrate the type of Tamil inculturation which allows Tamil thought to influence the very process of inculturation.   (Cf. Jeyaraj, 2016: 184-187).

Questions also persist as to whether Griffiths can legitimately claim to be a *sannyāsi.* His main conservative critics deny this claim.   Swami Devananda writes, "in that you are a Roman priest and a Benedictine monk, you cannot possibly be a sannyasin" (Goel, 2010: 389).   Pereira raises the same concern, citing Devananda (Pereira, 1990: 13-14).   Central to their critique is the technical, institutional sense of *sannyāsa* wherein each *sannyāsi* connects with a particular *sampradāya* through *dīkṣā* as outlined in the *Saṃnyāsa Upaniṣads* (Johnson, 2009: 284-286).   Griffiths never took *dīkṣā* from a *guru* or connected with a *sampradāya*, therefore he cannot claim the title *sannyāsi* (Cornille, 1991: 145; Klostermaier, 2003: 5)*.*

However, Rajan identifies the *core essence* of *sannyāsa* as *brahmavidyā* and renunciation (1989: 25-34; cf. Robinson, 2004: 56). Johnson and Klostermaier affirm the more generic use of *sannyāsa* (Johnson, 2009: 285; Klostermaier, 2007: 299). Griffiths appeals to this usage, regarding the *sannyāsi* as "one who renounces the world in order to seek for God" (Griffiths, 1982b: 18).   In this view, Griffiths is an "authentic Indo-Christian *sannyāsin*" to the extent that he accepts the essential *sannyāsic* characteristics and places them in conversation with Christian theology (Rajan, 1989: 215; cf. Vattakuzhy, 1981: 204-238).   The most important factor in determining the authenticity of a *sannyāsi* is adherence to the general *sannyāsic* essence.   Whether one requires the technical, institutional definition or allows the generic definition largely determines how one evaluates the concept of Christian *sannyāsa*.[6]

Finally, Griffiths is ambiguous regarding the purpose of inculturation.   He explicitly rejects instrumental inculturation, labelling it "deceptive" and "very harmful." Instead, inculturation means sharing in and learning from a different cultural experience or tradition (Rajan, 1989: 243-244; Griffiths, 1981: 44).   Cornille observes, in the ashram context inculturation is "understood as a process of mutual fecundation in the course of which both traditions involved are enriched and transformed" (1991: 198). Conversely, Griffiths cites lack of conversion as the

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[6] However, negative appraisal of Christian *sannyāsa* may also arise because of its association with Brahminical Hinduism. Cf. Collins, 2007: 77.

"driving force" for inculturation (Griffiths, 1981: 46-47). He also implicitly endorses instrumental inculturation by aligning himself with 16th century Jesuit missionary Roberto de Nobili (Griffiths, 1984: 59). While he has no intention to "convert India to Western Christianity," he maintains, "the seed of the Gospel planted in India can flower and create a new culture, a new way of Christianity, a new flowering of the Church" (Rajan, 1989: 233). Thus, Griffiths simultaneously claims the purpose of inculturation is mutual enrichment rather than conversion *and* that inculturation will produce an Indian Christianity attractive to Hindus. This ambiguity invites the criticism from conservative Hindus discussed above.

Strengths of Griffiths Approach

While Griffiths' failure to learn Tamil and to relate to his specifically Tamil context can be regarded as a major weakness of his approach to inculturation in Tamil Nadu, he demonstrates other potential strengths. As noted, Griffiths directs his attention to *advaita vedānta*, the *Bhagavadgītā*, and other *Brahminical* and *Sanskritic* forms of Hinduism in dialogue and inculturation. While this approach exhibits definite flaws in his Tamil setting, it may prove valuable in pan-Indian contexts, particularly in Indian diaspora. For example, as Kurien shows, "official" US American Hinduism is growing increasingly more ecumenical, pan-Indian, and unified under the forces of American multiculturalism (2007: 52, 74). American Hindus have simplified Hinduism in order to make it more understandable in the American context, promoting an all-embracing, tolerant vision of *sanātana dharma* with the *Bhagavadgītā* taken as the key Hindu scripture (Kurien, 2007: 7-8, 185). While regional Hinduisms certainly still exist especially at the popular level, the most prominent discourse remains pan-Indian because of the presence of multiple sectarian groups and the building of ecumenical temples. Mosher observes it is "exceedingly common" to hear a version of Vivekananda's *advaita vedānta* at these ecumenical temples (Mosher, 2015: 14). In this light, Griffiths offers a useful paradigm for inculturation: he provides a model of Hindu-Christian dialogue eager to converse with and learn from the common form of Hinduism, *advaita vedānta*. (Cf. Robinson, 2004: 298-300). The pan-Indian, *vedāntic* approach mirrors Griffiths' overall approach, particularly in relation to the *Bhagavadgītā*. (Cf. Robinson, 2006: 80-85). While some American Hindus would likely take offense at his inculturation efforts as do some conservative Hindus in India, others would appreciate his admiration for *advaitic* experience and generalized Hindu culture (Cf. Wingate, 2014: 118).

Griffiths also approaches individual Hindus and other non-Christians with an attitude of friendship and hospitality. In accordance with Benedictine hospitality, Griffiths sees non-Christians as *friends* rather than enemies or people to conquer (Griffiths, 1958: 272). Seeking to welcome every stranger as Christ himself, Griffiths establishes a rule at Shantivanam "never to refuse anybody" (Swindells, 1997: 79). His sense of welcome crosses boundaries of religion, caste, ethnicity, culture, and gender, as he daily receives visitors to his hut (Matus, 2004: 10-11, 17-18). As Mong summarizes, "Griffiths impressed people by his humility, warmth and hospitality. His success in his attempt to assimilate Indian culture into his spirituality was due to his

gracious nature and openness to others. Griffiths understood that the Christian faith could not be explained in the language of another culture without being deeply rooted in human relationship" (Mong, 2016: 55).

Conclusion

Griffiths provides a model of Indian Christian inculturation with affinities for Bevans anthropological model. He draws primarily from *advaita vedānta* and demonstrates this through his *sannyāsic* life.   While his particular approach demonstrates shortcomings for an exclusively Tamil context, most notably failure to learn Tamil language and draw from specifically Tamil forms of Hinduism, his approach may prove more useful in a pan-Indian, ecumenical context. He allows his Christianity to be influenced by a key form of Hindu thought and approaches the Hindu other with hospitality and friendship. His eagerness to learn from Hindu spirituality and practice serves as a useful guide for Hindu-Christian interaction.

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'Both Truly Christian and Truly Indian:' A 20th century example of Indianized Christianity in the visions of E. Stanley Jones[1]

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Abstract

Sat Tal Christian ashram, located in Northern India and founded by the American Methodist missionary Dr. E. Stanley Jones in 1930, is one of the few Protestant Christian ashrams still active in India today. This article narrates the history of Sat Tal Christian ashram (henceforth STA) and explores some of its original founding visions articulated in 1930 by Jones in a piece of writing called 'Ashram Ideals' (Jones 2006: 347-349). The Ashram Ideals included that: (1) it would be a miniature kingdom of God; (2) people would not simply *seek* answers but would also *be* an answer through the ways they lived their lives; (3) individuals from multiple faiths could share in spiritual community together; (4) all who sincerely desire God would be welcome there; and (5) it would be "both truly Christian and truly Indian." I engage with each of these visions more thoroughly in my doctoral thesis; here, I focus primarily on the fifth. Specifically, I seek to better understand precisely what Jones meant by truly *Christian* and truly *Indian*, and I articulate some of the external factors which influenced him in these regards.

Key words: Protestant Christian ashrams, inculturation, North India, Christian missions, E. Stanley Jones

I first contextualize Jones's visions—shaped by the motifs of 'inculturation'[2], ecumenical living, and interreligious relations—within some of the broader social,

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[2] The term 'inculturation' was not widely used until the 1960s—individuals such as Bede Griffiths then used the term widely. Indeed, Jones, at least not in any of his writings which pre-date 1970, never used the term 'inculturation' because it was not available to him when he established STA in 1930. Jones instead used descriptive rhetoric to convey the notion that Christianity could indeed take on some of India's cultural idioms while still being fully 'Christian.' The most comparable singular term that I am aware of that Jones used in lieu of 'inculturation' is 'naturalization.' (See, for example, *Christ of the Round Table,* in which he speaks of Jesus being naturalized (p. 106). Nevertheless, I

political, and historical milieus of the interactions that various forms of Christianity have had with Indic cultures. As I discuss below, Christianity was often represented as a 'foreign' religion due to the ways that the colonial powers of Portugal and Britain were occasionally associated with the missionary propagation of Christianity.[3] However, toward the end of the 19th century, Christianity was increasingly and consciously presented by some Christian figures as a religious system of belief and practice which should embody Indian, and not exclusively foreign, cultural idioms, expressions, and subjectivities; thus, both Indian Christians themselves and foreign missionaries began to actively configure, enact, and embody varying types of indigenous Christianities. While some popular discourses continued (as they do to the present day) to castigate Christianity as an alien import which cannot be harmonized with, or rooted in, the 'national' ethos of Indians, these indigenized expressions significantly challenged the assumption that Christianity was exclusively a foreign transplant on Indian soil.

Understanding some of the key events and individuals who influenced both of these rather different identities associated with, or projected on to, Christianity—one as exclusively European and the other as indigenized into distinctively Indic idioms—is an essential starting point for the second section of this article, which explores Jones's desire for STA to be both truly Christian and truly Indian. I contextualize this desire in some of the broader social and political contexts of India in the 1920s and 1930s to explore some of the external influences at play in Jones's efforts to make STA both *Christian* and *Indian*. I also draw variously from archival records of the ashram, Jones's own written or spoken words, and oral histories that I collected from a number of individuals who knew Jones personally and/or attended the ashram in its early years. The majority of these oral histories were recorded during the portion of my main fieldwork at STA (August 2016–May 2017), while others were gathered in the following year via phone calls, email exchanges, or in person during short-term return visits to India.[4] Finally, I raise some vital questions concerning the particular ways that Jones sought to establish a 'truly Christian and truly Indian' atmosphere at STA, and I explore some of the challenges and limitations of his specific methods and visions of inculturation.

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consistently use the term 'inculturation' throughout this article to refer to any practice which sought to merge Christian identity with Indian cultural idioms.

[3] As a sort of shorthand, I refer to 'the Portuguese' and 'the British' in this article. But it should be noted that there is a mini discipline which explores precisely to what extent the Portuguese state and the British state were directly involved in spreading Christianity. (See, for example, Stanley, 2003).

[4] I thank the former and current Acharyas, as well as the former and current managers and hostesses, and other ashramites of STA for sharing their recollections with me. I am also grateful to the archivists at Asbury Theological Seminary and Asbury University, as well as members of the E. Stanley Jones foundation, for helping me access valuable resources regarding Jones's life.

Indian Christianity as Foreign and Indigenous: An Overview

Whether the various doctrinal beliefs and ritual practices of Christianity in India ought to be viewed as being either the distinctive inflections of their Indian locations or the results entirely of their foreign sources remains an intensely debated topic amongst theologians, scholars of religion, and laypeople alike. Some scholars have drawn attention to the ways in which any discussions concerning the foreignness of Christianity arise from a (false) premise that Christianity is necessarily Eurocentric and that it is therefore only familiar (that is, not foreign) within European or Europeanized cultures. In a recent contribution to the scholarly discussion of whether Christianity should always be viewed as a foreign religion insofar as India is concerned, Chad Bauman and Richard Fox Young reject the notion that there is one (western) normative Christianity as the ideal archetype to which Indian expressions of Christianity could be compared or should conform (Bauman and Young, 2014). Their interrogation of the very concept of the 'foreignness' of forms of non-western Christianity is also seen in the works of some scholars in the field of Early Christianity, who have often highlighted the conceptual-institutional instabilities associated with defining precisely what makes an individual or a community 'Christian' (Harrison, Humfress, and Sandwell, 2014; Boyarin, 2006; Fredriksen, 2018). Instead of affirming the existence of a normatively valid Christianity from which other expressions supposedly deviate or become diffused, they argue that the difficulty of defining Christianity has been present across the Christian traditions since the first century and is therefore not unique to modern times.

These scholarly frameworks which resolutely reject, from various theological, historical, and sociological perspectives, the idea that there is one normative Christianity located in European metropoles, raise significant objections to the presuppositions that undergird many of the claims of Christianity's 'foreignness' in India. And yet, such claims continue to be widely accepted across large sectors of Indian collective consciousness. These perceptions have been addressed in detail by several scholars who show that one of the main reasons that a discourse of 'foreignness' has generally prevailed is that a significant number of conversions to Christianity are associated with European missionaries who had operated within Portuguese and British colonial milieus (Webster, 2012). In this vein, Alexander Henn provides an overview of the specific ways in which some early-modern Portuguese Roman Catholics violently enforced their religious views on other cultures; notable in this regard are the Catholic Church's official stance to ban all forms of *accomodatio* and, in particular, the Council of Trent (1545-1563) which put forth several mandates which explicitly targeted Asian Christians who were deemed by the Council to have lapsed from the true faith and having developed too much overlap with earlier forms of religiosity (Henn, 2014: 47). Consequently, individuals who appeared to be too closely linked with their pre-Christian roots, or with any practice which was not explicitly Christian, underwent careful scrutiny from the

Roman Catholic Church (Badrinath, 2000: 14). We see this kind of scrutiny of religious belief and practice (and subsequent attempts at correction) carried out by the Catholic Portuguese when interacting with Syrian Christians (a community of Christianity also known as St. Thomas Christians who trace their origins in India back to 52 A.D.) from the 16th century onwards. In his detailed historical narrative of Syrian Christian communities, L.W. Brown documents the many ways that the Portuguese tried to implement their normative understanding of orthodox Christian beliefs and practices within Syrian Christian contexts during their age of sociopolitical influence in Goa, and wanted to correct (and more specifically, eliminate) the notions and practices relating to *karma*, *dharma*, and other broadly Hindu spiritual ideas that the Syrian Christians had incorporated into their own Christian practices (Brown, 1982:36).

The interactions between Britain and India, between roughly 1800 and 1947, were also highly influential in producing and entrenching a widespread perception that Christianity is a religion of foreigners. Active proselytization was not an initial feature of British interactions with India, and it was, in fact, discouraged under the official charter issued by Queen Elizabeth I on 31 December 1600. However, an 1813 revision of the East India Company's charter included a clause which stated that provisions should be made to help people wishing to go to India for 'religious and moral improvement'—thereby, it seemed, that there was a conceptual openness to missionary activity amongst British officials. Still, any explicit reference to missionaries was avoided.[5] It is worth noting that even this implicit move to legalize the entry of missionaries into India was greeted with hostility by British administrators such as Thomas Grenville who declared, "We are conquerors in India, and I do not like to see a regiment of missionaries acting under and with the authority of unrestricted power" (Embree, 1962:271). Notwithstanding the somewhat lukewarm attitude of the Government towards the active proselytization of the natives, the rise of British Christian missionary organizations corresponded broadly with an increase in the evangelical attitudes of some Protestant groups in England during the 19th century (Hindmarsh, 2018; Ward, 2002; Noll, 2010). While the Portuguese had utilized fairly overt forms of correction with regard to the doctrines and practices of the Syrian Christian communities, English missionaries such as Thomas Norton and Thomas Munro professed that they did not want to change the conceptual and experiential forms of Syrian Christianity in India. They were, in fact, quite interested in preserving the language and liturgical tradition of the Syrian Christians, and only sought to strengthen the governance structure of the Syrian Church. In order to accomplish this, they strategically placed themselves at the top of the governing structure, ensuring that they had the power to authoritatively guide and overrule any decisions made by the Syrian Christian

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[5] Arthur Mayhew writes: 'When the time came for remodeling the charter accordingly, there was no longer any talk of Government patronage and maintenance. There was not even any explicit reference to missionaries as apart from other philanthropists' (Mayhew, 1929: 100-101).

leadership, who were, however, allowed to keep the public seats of power (Brown, 1982:134–138).

However, in the 19th century British missionaries in India began to take stronger measures to explicitly correct the various aspects of Syrian Christianity that they took to be spiritually erroneous. Brown offers the example of Joseph Peet, an Anglican, who between 1833-1835 vocally opposed the ways that Syrian Christians in Kerala observed rules of religious purity. Peet not only preached against their observance of such religious purity laws, but also deliberately attempted to defile their purity by touching them after they had completed their ritual washing in preparation for a religious feast. Commenting on Peet's public efforts to stridently eradicate aspects of Indian Christian practices that did not align with European Anglican Christian cultural norms, Brown writes that "there were many such incidents and while they may be deplored as discourteous and unwise it has to be recognized that the missionaries had become convinced that silence on their part would be, in fact, a denial of fundamental Christian truth" (Brown, 1982:138).

Christian convictions similar to those of Joseph Peet can be seen around the same time period in places like Bengal, where some British individuals consciously steered away from a formerly-held appreciation of Indian languages, customs, and philosophical traditions to dismissing them as primitive, and actively sought to alter them through administrative interventions (Bearce, 1961). From roughly the 1830s onwards, a number of British administrators and policymakers, along with British Baptist missionaries who lived in Bengal (Julius Lipner names William Carey, Joshua Marshman, and William Ward as the 'British Baptist trio'), played a role in promoting English education for Bengalis. Thomas Macaulay's now infamous 'Minute on Education', written in 1835, illustrates the ways in which administrators believed that they should 'Anglicize' India not only for the presumed benefits that would accrue to the Indians themselves, but also for the strategic goals of the British colonists who could use the western-educated Indians as interpreters. But, more pertinent to our present discussion, the Baptist missionaries—even those who learned and published in Bengali—equally sought to utilize their role as educators to convey western values and ideologies and, ultimately, to supplant existing ones. Lipner makes it clear that such missionaries "deplored Hinduism and its cultural expressions. They subscribed to the view that contemporary Hinduism was socially, morally and theologically irredeemable" (Lipner, 1999:5). A crucial point of both Portugal's and Britain's interactions with forms of Indian Christianity is this: foreign powers repeatedly deemed various expressions of Indian Christianity to be doctrinally incorrect, and they sought to correct them by aligning them more closely with European Christianity.

Inculturation[6] before Stanley Jones

It is against this backdrop of 'foreignness' that expressions of inculturation began to emerge from around the turn of the twentieth century. Jones is often represented by his biographers and admirers as being 'ahead of his time' with regard to his desire to present Christ with distinctively Indian theological idioms and cultural nuances. Especially amongst his extended family, his close friends, and those closely associated with the 'North American Christian Ashram movement',[7] Jones is routinely championed as a pioneer of inculturation.

Jones was not, however, by any means the first to conceptualize and inspire the practices of Christians who sought to live out their faith in cultural forms that would be familiar to (Brahmanical) Hindus. Individuals like Roberto de Nobili (1577-1656), Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (1861-1907), Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922), and Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889-1929) are notable forerunners in imagining, forging, and enacting lifestyles that were both doctrinally Christian and culturally Indian; they have been studied in great detail by a number of scholars.[8] As a way of celebrating and honoring their efforts at inculturation, the portraits of both Ramabai and Singh are fixed to the walls in the small prayer room of STA, and a letter which Singh penned to Jones in the 1920s is archived in STA's records. De Nobili and Upadhyay do not, to my knowledge, hold any official place of recognition within STA, but de Nobili is often regarded in scholarship as the first Catholic missionary who attempted to integrate the gospel with some types of Hindu and Indic cultural worlds, and Upadhyay was among the first of Indian Christians to identify as both a Roman Catholic and a Hindu *sannyasi*. (Paul Collins also draws our attention to three other Christian priests—Thomas Palackal, Thomas Porukara, and Kuriakos Elias—all of whom began to live as *sannyasis* in 1831 (Collins, 2007: 78).) Many of these individuals were Roman Catholics (whereas Jones came from a Methodist background) but there are also various precursors of Christian ashrams among non-Catholic communities. We know that there were discussions relating to Christian ashrams in Protestant contexts in 1910 which were initiated by S.K. Rudra (Collins, 2007: 79), and also among other non-Catholics in April 1912 at a meeting of the National Missionary Society in Delhi (Taylor, 1979: 283)—and there could have been earlier, undocumented instances. The earliest institution of a Protestant ashram was in 1917 in Satara by N.V. Tilak, but the ashram did not last very long due to Tilak's death only two years later (Collins, 2007: 79). The first Protestant ashram which lasted more than a few years, Christukula, was founded in 1921 in the town of Tiruppattur, in the Vellore district of Tamil Nadu, South India (Taylor, 1979: 284). An even longer-lasting and better-known Protestant ashram, by the name of Christa

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[6] Refer to footnote #2 regarding my use of the word inculturation.

[7] The E. Stanley Jones foundation keeps a record of the various international ashrams which are associated with Stanley Jones; many of these are in the U.S.A. and are referred to by the E. Stanley Jones Foundation as the North American Christian Ashram movement.

[8] See, for example, Kuttiyanikkal, 2014:78–86; Schouten, 2008; and Lipner, 1999.

Seva Sangha, was founded in 1922 by Jack C. Winslow (Collins, 2007:81), and a few years later the Christu Dasa ashram was founded in 1929 by P. John Varghese in Palghat, Kerala (Kuttiyanikkal, 2014: 95). These various Christian ashrams, and a number of others which were formed after 1930—including the numerous Catholic ashrams which began to emerge in the 1950s—have been documented and explored in great detail elsewhere (Vandana, 1978; Taylor, 1979; Collins, 2007: 77–89; Kuttiyanikkal, 2014: 94–103; Webb, 1981). Thus, we can see that there were various efforts to inculturate Christianity in India long before Jones's attempt.

Having indicated in previous sections some of the reasons why Christianity has been perceived in India as a religion of the foreigners, and also given several examples of individuals and institutions which combined Indian cultural expressions with Christianity long before the time of STA, we can now return to Jones's work, which made significant contributions to these earlier efforts at inculturation.

Dr. E. Stanley Jones: the founder of Sat Tal Christian ashram

When the American Methodist missionary Dr. E. Stanley Jones (1884-1973) began to visit the Kumaon foothills in the outer Himalayan region of Uttarakhand (Northern India) around 1915, he would often walk along a series of roughly trodden footpaths through forests and hills toward a large plot of land called Sat Tal. Sat Tal, named after the seven (*sat*) freshwater lakes *(tal)* which surround the region, was significantly smaller than its closest town (Nainital) and had little going on within it. Even today, over one hundred years later, Sat Tal is home to only a few buildings other than STA: it has a small post office, a handful of tea stalls where one can purchase one's favorite snacks and other odds and ends, one tiny church (kept locked and unused for most of the year), and a YMCA. But back in 1915, what is now STA was a (largely unsuccessful) tea plantation owned by a retired British engineer, Mr. Evans. The tea plantation spanned around 300 acres, and Mr. Evans and his wife rented out the estate's cottages to individuals (mostly foreign missionaries) who wanted to escape to the hills from the heat of the Indian summer and rejuvenate themselves alongside the freshwater lakes and the remarkably diverse wildlife. From the Nainital hill station to Sat Tal was about twelve miles on foot, and Jones greatly enjoyed the walk.

Jones, who frequently travelled across the country to some of the biggest and busiest cities in order to preach the gospel after his arrival in India in 1907, found refuge in the idyllic calm of the Kumaon foothills. He writes fondly about the several summers that he, his wife and daughter spent at Sat Tal while the land was still owned by the Evans, and one can imagine that—despite professing later that he had never imagined that he would own the place, let alone develop an ashram there—Jones found in the hills of Sat Tal some of the comforts of home. When Jones was not recuperating in the calm of Sat Tal, he was actively evangelizing both in

India and elsewhere. Having had his own life positively transformed when he committed himself to Christ's teachings as a seventeen-year old in the USA, Jones was a passionate Methodist who wished to share the Christian gospel with whomever would listen to him (Mathews-Younes, 2008: 5). Reflecting on his earlier years as a young evangelist in India, Jones confessed that he had been a bit naïve in his ideas about other people's receptivity to the Christian gospel—he had unreflectively assumed that everyone he spoke with would quickly and eagerly respond to Christian teachings, and adopt them as their own. Instead, he was startled to learn that many individuals already had a religious framework which guided their beliefs and actions, so that his explanations of what he deemed to be the key doctrinal points of Christianity did not, he discovered with surprise, seem to offer anything unique or necessary to their religious life. Jones was pushed into this realization firsthand while trying to evangelize a Hindu man during his first Indian train-ride—the man found Jones's stories compelling, and even seemed to listen with genuine interest, but at the end retorted that he had similar stories in his own religion, and left the train without showing any interest in learning more about Christianity. This early realization is an important incident which prompted Jones's first substantive shift in the way he approached his evangelism. Specifically, Jones began to realize that trying to instill the specific *teachings of Christianity* was not nearly as important as communicating the *person of Christ.* Consequently, he began to emphasize the soteriological impact of an encounter with the living person of Christ; he deeply believed that individuals who thus encountered Christ would be so enamored with, and struck by their own need for, Christ that they could do no other than begin to follow his teachings. This shift in focus from doctrine to person, as Jones indicates, continued to mature throughout his years as an evangelist. He went through several iterations in his life-time in which he re-centered himself on this personal focus, and allowed it to become expressed in his evangelical approaches in different ways (Jones, 1968).

Jones originally concentrated his evangelism on individuals from the lower socio-economic classes—individuals who, using the vocabulary common to the time period, he referred to interchangeably as 'low castes', 'untouchables', and 'outcastes'.[9] It was only after more than a decade in India that Jones began to specifically tailor his evangelical efforts towards individuals whom he described as "educated high castes" (Jones, 1925: 10). Numerous people, at different times throughout my fieldwork, narrated a story about Jones which neatly encapsulates this marked shift from evangelizing to primarily lower-caste individuals to engaging

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[9] Jones's biographers—as well as his own writings—give the impression that this evangelical focus on lower castes was in keeping with other standard practices of missionaries at his time. We know, however, that a majority of early missionaries in fact focused their evangelical efforts on upper-caste Hindus; certainly, this was the case for the Jesuit missionaries who approached their missionary work with the understanding that upper-caste Hindus were at the top of the social hierarchy and, if converted, there would be a sort of "trickle down" effect into individuals from lower-caste communities.

with higher-caste individuals. In the 1920s, when Jones was speaking with an educated upper-caste Hindu government officer at one of Jones's recreational activities, the officer asked Jones why foreign missionaries focused all their attention on converting lower-caste individuals. Why, the officer wondered, did the missionaries not preach also to the Brahmanical Hindus and others who came from more educated backgrounds? Jones informed the officer that he and other missionaries had presumed that Brahmins did not want what the missionaries were offering, to which the officer replied,"we do want you, if you come in the right way."[10] For Jones, this conversation was a revelatory moment which, combined with his initial shift in focus to the person of Christ discussed above, transformed the style of his missionary efforts after the 1920s. Among other changes to his evangelizing methods, Jones established round-table conferences (~1917-1920)[11] in order to promote dialogues between Christians, educated Hindus and others, and he later founded STA in 1930. We can thus far understand two distinct shifts in Jones's approach to evangelism: firstly, he desired to speak of, and indeed offer to others, the *person of Christ* rather than proclaim particular doctrines of western Christianity; and secondly, he realized that this sharing of Christ need not be limited to individuals from lower-caste backgrounds. As the Hindu judge had confirmed for Jones, Brahmins and other educated individuals too might indeed receive the missionaries' gospel—if the missionaries managed to come "in the right way."

But what exactly *was* this "right" way? Evidently, as is suggested in the judge's comment, the way in which foreign missionaries had brought the message of Christianity to the untouchables (or Dalits and OBCs in current administrative terminologies) was not "the right way" to bring the same message to Brahmins. The missionaries' tried-and-tested methods of sharing the gospel with lower-caste individuals would seem not to suffice. In the first section we outlined some of the key historical exchanges which shaped the ways in which Christianity was perceived as a foreign religion in some locations in India, and we can assume that these perceptions did, at some level, also influence Jones's thought. At the same time, in order to understand the somewhat complicated and interlinked historical, social, and political currents of the 1920s and the 1930s which informed what was deemed to be "the right way" to approach Brahmins with the Christian message, we also need to look more broadly beyond the historical narratives of Indian Christianities. Specifically, we must note that these decades witnessed the emergence and the

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[10] This story is also told by one of Jones's biographers (his granddaughter Anne Mathews-Younes) and can also be found in multiple sources of Jones's own writings. See Jones, 1968: 86; 1925: 10).
[11] Some of Jones's biographers date the origin of the round table conferences to 1930. However, oral histories that I collected during my ethnographic fieldwork indicate that Jones's held round table conferences before establishing Sat Tal ashram in 1930. Jones's own writings include tangential remarks to do with the origin of the round table conferences. At one point, he refers to a note "written 8 years ago [in 1917]" in which he developed the style and atmosphere that he wanted to create with his roundtable conferences (1925: 13). At another point, writing in 1934, he claims that he has "listened in for fourteen years" on the roundtable conferences, indicating that they would have commenced in 1920 (1934: 218.)

consolidation of certain forms of hardline nationalist movements (later often clubbed together and referred to under the term 'Hindutva'). There are a number of pivotal moments which mark these volatile landscapes where socio-religious identities were being actively reconstituted and reconfigured: V.D. Savarkar's *Hindutva* tract was published and distributed in 1923; the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (later associated with the Sangh Parivar) was established in 1925; in 1928 there was a *shuddhi* ('purification') ceremony in Goa in which a large number of Roman Catholics expressed their interest in returning to Hinduism, and so forth. Alongside these socio-political shifts within colonial milieus, we also notice the increasing representation of Advaita Vedanta as the essence of Hindu spirituality by some prominent members of the Hindu intelligentsia, partly in response to Christian missionary critiques of Hindu life-worlds as idolatrous, superstitious, and heathenish throughout much of the nineteenth century.[12] The philosophical and the soteriological teachings of Advaita Vedanta had been actively imported to some western countries after Swami Vivekananda's addresses at the World Parliament of Religions in 1893, and since then they had become increasingly well known in certain circles across the US, Canada, and Europe.[13] Several Hindu intellectuals, social reformers, and political figures presented Advaitic spirituality as the quintessence of the religious traditions of the world, and as the 'higher Hinduism' which was superior to the diverse cultic practices within India. It was against this backdrop of a self-assertive Hinduism that Jones's "right" way of bringing the gospel to Hindus was configured, and it is therefore not surprising that it was heavily informed by Vedantic, Brahmanical vocabularies, norms, and ideas. Afterall, Jones was—as we all are—influenced by the social discourses which he inhabited.

Jones also had to grapple with the emerging figure of Gandhi who was regarded by some of his contemporaries—Indian and English alike—as a Christ-like figure, and Jones himself frequently described Gandhi in Christian terms (Jones, 1948:13, 74). We also know, from Jones's own accounts, that he was deeply influenced by Gandhi's advice. Jones found Gandhi's practices and teachings regarding non-violent resistance to be both highly inspirational and spiritually uplifting, and he was thus genuinely interested in learning from Gandhi. Scholars have noted that Gandhi himself, and later Gandhian ashrams, had a significant influence on the establishment and development of many Christian ashrams (Collins, 2007: 77). It is possible that Gandhi's ashrams (the first of which, Satyagraha—later named Sabarmati—was established in 1915) influenced Jones's own development of STA—

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[12] The extent to which members of the Hindu intelligentsia highlighted Advaita Vedanta as the essence of Hindu spirituality due to the ways that Jesuit missionaries from the 17th century onward had described Advaita as an ideal platform from which to present Christian ideas into a Hindu worldview is an interesting point to consider in this context. It cannot be further explored here but the question remains worth posing: what might have happened had the Jesuits *not* highlighted Advaita in such a manner? Would it have remained as prominent?

[13] Advaita Vedanta was also transmitted to western audiences through longstanding German interest in Indic thought (and the subsequent translations which made the philosophies more accessible to Europeans) as well as by groups like the Theosophical Society.

perhaps even some of the founders of the Christian ashrams mentioned in the first section of this article were influenced by Gandhi. Whatever may have been the nature of Gandhi's influence on the notion of a Christian ashram, Jones sought out Gandhi for specific advice concerning how Christianity might be understood by Indians as a true Indian religion, rather than as a religion of the foreigners. Jones's first meeting with Gandhi occurred, according to Jones' recollection, "soon after [Gandhi's] return from South Africa [in 1915]" (Jones, 1948: 64). This meeting took place, as Jones explicitly points out, significantly before Gandhi had developed a public viewpoint concerning conversions to Christianity in India (Jones, 1948: 64).[14] Other biographers, however, date this meeting to 1919 (Mathews-Younes, 2017 :52). Apparently without regard for pleasantries, Jones presented his key question to Gandhi: "How can we [Christian missionaries] make Christianity naturalized in India, not a foreign thing, identified with a foreign government and a foreign people, but a part of the national life of India and contributing its power to India's uplift? What would you, as one of the Hindu leaders of India tell me, a Christian, to do in order to make this possible?" (Jones, 1948: 64). Gandhi responded, "First, I would suggest all of you Christians, missionaries and all, must begin to live more like Jesus Christ. Second, practice your religion without adulterating it or toning it down. Third, emphasize love and make it your working force, for love is central in Christianity. Fourth, study the non-Christian religions more sympathetically to find the good that is within them, in order to have a more sympathetic approach to the people" (Jones, 1948: 65; Jones, 1925: 102–103).

Considering these three distinct lines of force—Jones's desire to share the living person of Christ rather than the specific doctrines of western Christianity, the encouragement he received to approach Brahmins with the gospel, and the advice and the spiritual model of Gandhi—it is not surprising that Jones eventually established a Christian ashram. Firstly, as Sister Vandana has argued, ashrams often focused on the charisma and the personality of the individual guru rather than on subscribing to a specific set of doctrinal claims in the way of religious institutions (Vandana, 1978: 16–37; Taylor, 1979). Therefore, ashrams, it seemed to Jones, would facilitate sharing and teaching about the person of Christ (Jones, 1966: 70). Secondly, ashrams were embedded in the cultural heritages of some aspects of Brahmanical Hindu cultures, and were traditionally regarded as abodes of serenity, holiness, and spiritual gravity. And, as we see in one of his earliest books—written five years before establishing STA—Jones was already conversing with some itinerant Hindu ascetics (*sadhus*) and had visited specific ashrams such as the ashram of Rabindranath Tagore in Shantiniketan, near Calcutta (Jones, 1925: 184–185). Eunice Jones Mathews, the daughter of Stanley Jones, was interviewed in 1974 about her father's work in India and spoke in these terms about the influences that had led Jones to establish an ashram. She explained, "It bothered Daddy that among the Christian community so many new Indian Christians had abandoned their

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[14] However, in 1935, Gandhi made a strong statement regarding his disapproval of conversion. See *Indian Express*, Oct.4, 8&9.

cultures to take on a Western veneer. My father very much wanted to bring back as much of the Indian culture into Christianity and bring the Christian community back into their own culture…The Ashram was an answer for him" (Mathews-Younes, 2017:78).

And so Jones, along with Reverend Yunas Sinha and Miss Ethel Turner, purchased the roughly 300 acres of land from the tea plantation owners and began the process of transforming the land into STA. Jones envisioned STA, as mentioned in the introductory pages of this article, as being both "truly Christian and truly Indian" and he was determined to actively create an environment which catered to this vision.

Sat Tal Christian ashram: A Quest for the 'Truly Christian and Truly Indian'

The question of what precisely counts as either 'truly Christian' or 'truly Indian' is, of course, dependent on the individual figure or institutional authority who is staking the claim to authenticity. As Harold Coward asks, "What does it mean to be a Hindu? Or a Christian? [...] Who decides? [...] According to which criteria?" (Coward, 1989: xvii). The debates relating to 'true' or 'authentic' expressions of Christianity versus incomplete, or even completely erroneous, expressions are not limited to our discussion here; rather, anthropologists have demonstrated that such contestations are, in fact, a rather common phenomenon within Christian contexts, and especially Protestant contexts (Webster, 2013; Robbins, 2014). Jones's concern that STA be recognized as 'truly Christian' can be understood in the light of these contexts of contestation of socioreligious identities. Indeed, Jones wished that STA would be recognized by others as a distinctively *Christian* ashram, but the crucial question was: by whose criteria? Certainly, it was not papal authorities whom Jones sought to convince—as would have been the case for foreign missionaries from Roman Catholic contexts, such as Henri le Saux (Swami Abhishiktananda) who also established Christian ashrams. Nor did Jones desire to establish a Christian community which would be a mere eastern replica of his western (Methodist) Christian upbringing. For Jones, as we have seen, the defining features of Christianity extended beyond any specific doctrinal or institutional context (Jones, 1934: 215). And yet, Jones was adamant that STA was—beyond any shadow of doubt—*Christian*. In his autobiography, Jones writes clearly, "Some might surmise [that] because we have a Hindu term that therefore the Christian Ashram is an amalgamation of Christianity and Hinduism. Nothing could be further from the reality. The Christian faith, being life, assimilates. The Christian faith reaches into the culture of every nation and takes out things, which can be assimilated into its purpose, but in doing so makes something entirely new and different" (Jones, 1968:220–221). Thus, we see that from Jones's own Christ-formed standpoint, the *assimilative* power of Christianity, as much as that word might grate on our post Said-ian subjectivities, indicates not so much a reduction of all human religiosity to

Christianity, but their spiritual elevation into a new life in Christ. To repeat Jones's words: "The Christian faith, *being life*, assimilates."

This raises the question: precisely what did Jones mean by his statement that STA is 'truly Christian?' We know, as was alluded to above, from Jones's own writings that his views concerning Christianity changed substantially during his time as a missionary in India, and that he consciously set aside some of the doctrinal convictions that he once held dearly. However, in spite of these changes, Jones consistently regarded his Christian faith as the dominant framework through which he interpreted his life and the world around him; it was, time and time again, the person of Christ on whom Jones focused his attention, and he believed that this personal Christ, removed from the specific trappings of western Christian cultures, could be passed on to Indians. In stark contrast to the 'British Baptist trio' of missionaries mentioned in the first section, Jones was not interested—at least not consciously—in presenting Indians with a form of Christianity that was deeply bound to its western cultural expressions. This vision of an Indianized Christianity for Indians is made clear in one of his early writings in which he asserts, "I am frank to say that I would not turn over my hand to westernize the East, but I trust I would give my life to Christianize [sic] it. It cannot be too clearly said that they are not synonymous" (Jones, 1925: 22). And, in the same book, he argues that India is able to "take from Christ because she is able to disassociate him from the West" (Jones, 1925: 87). It was this conviction that the categories of 'Christianization' and 'westernization' were not congruent which enabled him to consider establishing a Christian ashram which would be imbued with an Indian ethos (Jones, 1925: 3–6). And yet, at the same time, Jones held on to certain (Protestant) Christian convictions regarding the theological uniqueness of Christ, and he never veered away from this Christocentric standpoint. This rootedness in Christian orthodoxy is what places Jones in a somewhat different conceptual category than others like Henri le Saux who, late in his life, seems to have gestured towards a transcendental point beyond the categories of both traditional Hinduism and Roman Catholicism (Du Boulay, 2007).

One of the most tangible demonstrations of Jones's unwavering focus on the person of Jesus is the style of greeting that Jones established for STA: Jones would hold up three fingers as he verbalized the affirmation 'Jesus is Lord' (this quickly took the place of other customary greetings such as 'good morning' or 'hello,' and the action on its own could also serve as a greeting during silent hour) (Jones, 1997: 64). To this day, ashramites still hold up three fingers when they greet each other, saying either '*Yeshu Messih hai*' or 'Jesus is Lord,' and STA is decorated with various figurines, paintings, and photographs of three fingers held up in this manner. There is even a large print of Jones in his later years, holding the posture. Jones's constant effort to thus affirm the Lordship of Jesus is explained in his writings, where he emphasizes that the earliest Christian creed was 'Jesus is Lord', and he interprets

this confession to mean that self-surrender to Jesus is the earliest Christian attitude and practice.

Jones also made it abundantly clear in his lectures and writings that he believed that the true richness of life could not be found without Jesus. Indeed, Jones was willing to admit that he himself, Western civilization, and the Christian church were all in a continual process of becoming more Christ-like, and he explained all shortcomings as the inevitable result of the world not yet becoming fully conformed to Christ. It was only Jesus, Jones proclaimed, who was beyond reproach. Thus, Jones writes, "I will have to apologize for myself again and again, for I'm only a Christian-in-the-making. I will have to apologize for Western civilization, for it is only partly Christianized. I will have to apologize for the Christian church, for it, too, is only partly Christianized. But when it comes to Jesus Christ, there are no apologies upon my lips, for there are none in my heart" (Jones, 1968: 19).

Jones's emphasis on the centrality of the person of Jesus is also seen in the round table conferences at which he facilitated interreligious dialogue. During these round table conferences, Jones stipulated that all individuals must focus on their spiritual experiences of God rather than offer any rational or doctrinal explanations for why individuals should choose one particular religious path over another. When reflecting on these dialogues, Jones notes his gratitude to the participants for having taught him about Hinduism and Indian culture through these dialogical exchanges, and he further professed that elements of his own Christian faith had been altered through these interactions (Jones, 1928: 48). He describes his participation as a form of 'sympathetic listening', and can be understood to have entered into a dialectical exchange with Hindus (Jones, 1966: 3). Throughout these dialogues, Jones emphasized that individuals (when it was their turn to speak) would not be allowed to argue vociferously with others and they could not attempt to convince others to follow their own religion, nor were they permitted to enter into intellectual arguments about doctrine or questions of historicity. They were not even allowed to speak 'abstractly' or to 'merely discuss religion'. Rather, he declared, individuals must share, from their personal experiences, what their religion had done for them (Jones, 1928:22). At the same time, through creating an environment where he would share his experiences of Jesus with others, Jones was also clearly unabashedly motivated to demonstrate that Jesus offered something unique for the spiritual life. It must be made clear that Jones's Christ-centered worldview did not allow the possibility that any other religious path that was as soteriological and efficacious as the Christianity that he had embraced: for Jones, it was the person of Jesus Christ alone, to be properly understood as the unique Lord, who could imbue individual lives with positive spiritual significance and effect salvific transformations (Jones, 1968: 242).

For example, though Jones was no doubt aware of plenty of examples of individuals showing fervent devotion to a deity other than Jesus—'bhaktas' were one of the six

classifications that Jones retroactively applied to the individuals who had frequented his round table conferences (Jones, 1928: 27)—he remained adamant that devotion to anyone other than Jesus was simply not as transformative an experience as was devotion to Jesus. (Jones's basis for this claim is based on his personal reflections on anonymized individuals who, according to him, do not undergo the same type or degree of spiritual transformation as individuals who are devoted to Christ—this conviction forms the basis for his arguments in most of his books.) For Jones, it was the spiritual teachings of Jesus alone which could 'heal a society' and 'give life' to individuals and communities (Jones, 1928: 269), and so it was only Christ who was fully worthy of being the supreme object of our self-surrender. Despite respecting—and even learning from—some of their points of philosophy, Jones described non-Christian religions with terms such as 'inadequate' (Jones, 1928: 57) and 'bankrupt' (Jones, 1928: 78), and insinuated that their most redemptive qualities were, in fact, the result of 'an importation from Christian sources' (Jones, 1928: 93). He thus felt that India was plagued by 'a spirit of almost-ness' in which individuals, through their various religious beliefs and practices, had come so close to realizing God and yet very few of them had actually arrived at this goal (Jones, 1928: 128). As a matter of fact, however, Jones felt that the lives of a significant number of Christians also were characterized by a lack of intimacy with God as revealed through their absence of a sense of fellowship with Christ (Jones, 1928: 51). (Jones even places earlier versions of himself in this category.) All of this reveals that, for Jones, to be authentically *Christian*—that is, to truly become transformed through intimacy with Christ and, through this ongoing process of Christ-centered discipleship, to realize God—necessitated conscious, unwavering, and complete self-surrender to Jesus. Jones desired that all individuals, including those who already inhabited Christian contexts, would make conscious efforts to 'vertically convert' (a process which Jones (1928: 71) distinguished from 'horizontal conversion' i.e. moving across religious identities) themselves by way of making Christ the central point in every aspect of their life (Jones, 1997: 45).

Ensuring that STA was a *Christian* ashram, then, meant for Jones more than it being simply a place where Christians happened to gather, for he was insistent that individuals and institutions who identify as Christians might not, however, be fully committed to Christ in the way that he desired people to be. In claiming the ashram to be resolutely *Christian*, I therefore understand Jones to have been signaling his desire that it would be a place where individuals learned to surrender their selves fully to Jesus and cultivate patterns of Christian discipleship. Following from this, STA's daily practices like morning *dhyan* (which took the form of a period of individual contemplation of a selected biblical passage, usually from the New Testament, and then the insights could be shared with the larger group), a mandatory one-hour work period in which individuals worked wherever help was needed in the ashram, and the observance of a silent hour were all spiritual tools aimed at enabling individuals to become more Christ-like. Consistently in his writings, Jones argued that commitment to Christ was to be displayed through the

ongoing transformation of one's attitudes, instincts, and practices (Jones, 1997: 43, 65–82; Jones, 1925: 83; Jones, 1934: 222)—and so the virtues cultivated through such transformation were both the means to reach that end of Christ-likeness, and simultaneously were expressions of having approached that end. To be sure, some of the practices which were interwoven into the regular life at the ashram were also selected in order to establish an atmosphere of 'Indianness' at STA, but these very practices also served the dual purpose of establishing a specifically Christian atmosphere. After all, as Jones makes clear in his writings, he had no desire to hold on to practices he had learned on Western Christian locations simply for the sake of their western origins; he was prepared to take on any practice which might enable him to draw closer to Christ. Thus, he wrote, "we must fearlessly go over our faith, our methods, our organizations, our programs, and our spirit, and ask concerning each one the question: 'Does it unlock anything? Does it unlock reality, does it fit into the soul of India, does it bring me to God and to people, is it really redemptive, is it according to the mind of Christ?' And we must be willing to lay aside rusted keys that no longer fit into things and no longer bring us to vital touch with Christ and life" (Jones, 1928: 201).

Having explored some dimensions of what Jones meant by his claim that the ashram should be 'truly Christian', we can now begin to explore what he meant by 'truly Indian.' We might think of this phrase in this way: as far as Jones was concerned, to be truly Indian was to be culturally Hindu, and to be culturally Hindu was, in turn, to belong to Brahmanical cultures with Vedantic undertones. Ergo, for Jones to bring Christianity in a way that was 'truly Indian' would mean to create environments within which Brahmins, whose lifestyles were broadly shaped by a Vedantic ethos, would feel culturally, philosophically, and spiritually at home. Of course, as an evangelist, Jones was primarily interested in inviting people to explore and embrace the teachings of Christ, but he wanted them to be able to do so in ways that did not require them to summarily dismiss or repudiate their distinctively Indian cultural habitations. For Jones, this attempt to situate Christianity within Indic worlds meant that he had to present Christianity in ways that were acceptable and familiar to Hindus from broadly Brahmanical backgrounds. In other words, as much as Jones sought to make STA 'truly Indian', his notion of Indianness was confined to a relatively small expression of Indianness—one which was imbued with Brahmanical and Vedantic undertones. As much as Jones's relatively narrow understanding of what it meant to be 'Indian' might grate against our post Said-ian subjectivities, we must remember that he was influenced by the social and political contexts of his time; several pivotal moments of the 1920s and 1930s (mentioned above) established a self-assertive 'Hindutva' Hinduism as the 'right way' of being Indian; Jones, in turn, sought to imbue STA with that particular style of Indianness.

Indeed, although Jones's writing does, at times, demonstrate an understanding that Hinduism contained many different sects and philosophies (Jones, 1933: 56), he often wrote and preached in ways that used the term 'Hindu' to refer exclusively to

individuals from educated and higher-caste backgrounds who were clearly aligned with Brahmanical, Vedantic philosophies and practices. Such Brahmanical descriptions are epitomized in Jones's description of Jesus as 'the Christ of the Indian Road', in which, Jones envisions that Indians could imagine Jesus to be wearing the garments of an ascetic (*sadhu*) (Jones, 1925: 19). We find some further evidence that Jones's understanding of Hinduism was deeply Brahmanical in the ways in which he taught other foreigners—especially his close friends and family—about Hinduism. Bishop James K. Mathews, Jones's son-in-law and the man whom he appointed to be his successor as the chief Acharya of STA when Jones was not able to continue as Acharya, was, by his own admission, profoundly influenced by Jones. When interviewed in 1974, Acharya Mathews proclaimed an understanding of Hinduism which had strikingly Brahmanical resonances: "The Hindu spiritual ideal is self-cultivation. It is self-control. It is finally self-negation. The further you go into Hinduism, the more withdrawn you become from the world, and the more you concentrate on yourself and your identification with God" (Mathews-Younes, 2017: 87).

This understanding of Hinduism is saturated with notions of world-renunciation and rigorous asceticism that do not play a significant role in many devotional and folk expressions of Hinduism. Importantly, it is not that this understanding of Hinduism is completely incorrect (insomuch as there certainly are expressions of Hinduism which match Mathews's description) but it is incomplete; for it equates the totality of the diverse socioreligious traditions of Hinduisms with specific strands of Brahmanical Hinduism and their associations with ascetic lifeforms, as if there were no other diverse expressions on the ground. Indeed, there are many Indians who self-identify as coming from Hindu family backgrounds, but who have no affinity with the 'high' forms of Brahmanical Hinduism. Even more, there are a number of Indians whose identities are thoroughly distinct from Hinduism. For example, STA witnessed an increasing number of individuals who do not affiliate with Brahmanical Hinduism who began to visit it in the 1990s when it established a one-month long School of Evangelism programme with heavily subsidized rates so as to allow all individuals, irrespective of their socio-economic status, to come to the ashram.[15] In spite of what we can now recognize as a seemingly-infinite number of diverse expressions of 'Indianness', when Jones envisioned making STA 'truly Indian', it is clear that he sought to imbue it with specifically Brahmanical idioms.

In this vein, Jones stipulated in his Ashram Ideals that "the dress, the food, the manner of eating would be Indian. As we expect Hindus to come and share life with us for longer or shorter periods the food would be vegetarian" (Jones, 2006: 348). Jones encouraged men and women to wear traditional Indian clothing, and there are many photos in the STA archives which show Jones himself dressed in Indian garb, sometimes with a garland of flowers around his neck—though there are also

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[15] I explore this theme in more detail—based primarily on ethnographic research—in Chapter 4 of my PhD dissertation. (Pohran, 2019).

just as many photos of him dressed in a suit and tie while walking around the ashram grounds. As for the vegetarian food, it is possible that Jones was aware of the ways in which some non-Christian Indians feared that 'beef-eating' Christians might actively coerce or even force them into eating meat, and that he wanted to avoid even the slightest suspicion that such a thing might occur at STA.[16] But this stipulation of a vegetarian diet, just like that of the wearing of Indian clothing, was more likely due to Jones's intention to create an atmosphere which would be familiar to (Brahmin) Hindus. Additional features of the ashram, such as the month-long daily programme that Jones implemented at the 'Summer ashram' (and, in later years, at the 'Winter ashram') were specifically modeled on Gandhi's (Hindu-inflected) ashram. This included following a daily rhythm that is similar to that which is maintained in Hindu ashrams, i.e. rising early for personal meditation, attending a 'morning *dhyan*' with the group, eating meals together (everyone was expected to wash their own crockery and utensils), and participating in at least one hour of assigned work. The remainder of the day at STA consisted of group spiritual teachings, personal time, prayer time, lunch and supper, and the evening concluded with 'fellowship', during which hymns were sung and/or testimonies were shared. This daily rhythm was repeated throughout the week, but was broken on Sundays when—unless a church service was offered—there was no ashram program, but individuals were instructed to keep silence for the entire day.

In addition to adopting a daily program which was similar to the regime followed at Gandhian ashrams, Jones also sought to incorporate a spiritual practice which is common to many Hindu spiritual traditions: the acknowledgement of, and devotion to, a guru, whose character and virtue is supposed to infuse the ethos of an ashram. Yet, rather than declare himself as a human guru (a declaration which would not have appeared out of the ordinary to Hindu audiences) Jones proclaimed that it was Jesus, and not Jones himself, who was the true guru of STA. Jones was certainly not the first to speak of Jesus as a guru in Indian contexts. Here too, much like his overall efforts at inculturation, Jones was drawing from and contributing to diverse ongoing efforts at presenting a form of Christianity which would seem familiar to Indians.[17] Rather than elevating himself to the honorific status of a guru or a teacher, Jones preferred the identity of a 'Brother,' and frequently referred to others as his brothers and sisters (Jones, 1925: 83). These various attitudes and practices formed integral dimensions of Jones's efforts to establish STA as a place that would be 'truly Indian.'

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[16] The extent to which forcing Hindus to consume meat was historically practiced by Christians in India remains a contested topic. See, for example, (Robinson, 2003).

[17] As Catherine Cornille has highlighted in great detail, it has become an increasingly common practice for some Indian Christians (Cornille focuses specifically on Catholics in the post-Vatican II era as well as Swami Abhishiktananda in the 1950s) to speak of Jesus as their *guru* or as their *satguru.* See Cornille's monograph *The Guru in Indian Catholicism* (1991).

Concluding Remarks

On one level, this article has presented an outline of some institutional dimensions of one of the oldest Protestant Christian ashrams still active in India today. STA has received remarkably little scholarly attention when compared with Catholic ashrams like those of Henri le Saux or Bede Griffiths, and its historical and present-day practices are important in forming our understanding of Christian missiology, Hindu-Christian relations, and inculturation. But, on another level, the environment of STA itself has served as a detailed case study as we engage with two crucial questions: (1) is Christianity (only) a religion of foreigners and thereby forever marked with a western character, or can it become expressed through distinctively Indian cultural idioms, thereby extending its doctrinal, ritual, and institutional life beyond the confines of western Christianity? (2) In Jones's efforts to make STA 'truly *Christian*' and 'truly *Indian*', in what ways are the identities of both *Christian* and *Indian* first conceptualized and then embodied? And which external factors influence the ways that these identities are conceptualized? These questions prompted us to first summarize some of the administrative interventions and missionary entanglements of the Portuguese and the British colonial powers as we articulated some of the main reasons why Christianity has been perceived and represented as a foreign religion which is associated with European cultures. But, as the second section showed, various expressions of 'inculturation' emerged throughout the Indian sub-continent through figures like Roberto de Nobili, Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, Pandita Ramabai, and Sundar Singh, and also through the formation of several Christian ashram sites across the country— the enterprises of all these archetypal figures pre-dated Jones's own efforts. These expressions of inculturated Christianity challenged the notion that Christianity is necessarily and exclusively foreign, but they also established a cross-country ethos that Christianity could indeed be practiced in ways that felt familiar, rather than foreign, to Indians. We have suggested in this essay that at least part of the reason why Jones was able to establish STA at all was the momentum of the sensibilities generated by similar efforts which were being undertaken across India. Of course, there were also direct influences that were unique to Jones's own biographical trajectories and sociohistorical contexts—thus, he desired to share the living person of Christ rather than to teach specific doctrines of western Christianity; his conversation with a government official directly encouraged him to creatively find ways to approach educated Brahmins with the gospel; and he was deeply influenced by Gandhi—and these formative influences all contributed to Jones establishing STA in 1930.

Further, while the case-study of Jones and STA does provide a specifically Protestant example of Indianized Christianity in the 20th century, it also leaves us with additional questions. As we revisit his project of setting up STA as 'both truly Christian and truly Indian', we could ask: 'Which Christianity?' and 'Whose Indiannness?' On the one hand, we might highlight the various ways that the daily practices of STA indeed overlapped with Jones's goals to create an atmosphere that

was, at once, 'truly Christian' and 'truly Indian.' The various ways in which Christianity was expressed through Indic idioms surely generated an institutional ethos that Jones would have deemed a success. But, at the same time, these exercises resulted in an atmosphere which catered to Indians who were already familiar and comfortable with a particular strand of Indianness and Hindu spirituality—one that was specifically marked by Advaita Vedantic and Brahmanical undertones. Inevitably, the vast number of Indians who do not identify with such a philosophy and lifestyle (Cornille, 1991: 201) would not likely have found spiritual comfort or cultural appeal in the 'truly Indian' STA atmosphere. Of course, Jones would have been unaware of important critiques by Edward Said and others who, in the 1970s and 1980s, offered new analytical concepts and tools which we can now use to understand the sheer diversity of Indian life-worlds and the importance of recognising these diversities. However, now, we can query: to what extent did Jones's 'Indianness' cater to, and further augment, the belief that 'Indian' culture is equated with one particular strand of Hinduism? Furthermore, since one of Jones's original visions for STA was to create a miniature kingdom of God in which people from diverse religious backgrounds could share in spiritual life together, we can ask: precisely what sort of activities, if any, have taken place at STA which could have attracted Indians whose life-worlds do not resonate with those of Brahmanical Hinduism? And what would Jones's aim of establishing STA as 'truly Christian and truly Indian' look like in such an environment? These questions regarding the multiplicities of subjectivities and practices of 'Indianness,' and regarding how these various iterations of Indian identities might be conceptualized and catered to at STA, merit further exploration. After all, through seeking to separate Christianity from its specifically western expressions, Jones was able to envision and articulate a Christianity that was—seemingly—boundless in its global expressions, and was therefore a religion which could become universal as its shape shifted seamlessly into different cultural expressions. And indeed, through this hermeneutic move, Jones implicitly placed Christianity at the helm of interpretive control—for Jones, it was always Christianity which remained his primary and fundamental spiritual focus while the various cultural idioms with which it was enfleshed remained just that—somewhat passive embodiments, or mediating vehicles, through which his highly personalistic Christianity could be transported into relatively alien conceptual and experiential terrain. As many within the STA community have testified to, Jones's unwavering prioritisation of Christianity, along with his fervent sharing of the spiritual pivot of the person of Christ, have at times greatly contributed to harmonious interreligious relations, and have also positively transformed the lives of many individuals—especially for those who wish to explore or embrace Christianity without forsaking their various Indian customs and traditions. But, as I explore in more detail elsewhere, for those individuals who either do not share Jones's view of the non-negotiable uniqueness of Christ, or who do not resonate with the particular strand of Indianness that he sought to imbue into STA, the environment at STA can prove to be challenging.

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In the Intersection of the Ecclesial Boundaries: An Ecumenical Exploration of Benamin Schultze for the Sake of Madras Mission

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Abstract

Ecumenical musings and deliberations are not new to Indian Christianity. While the formation of Church of South India is an far-reaching milestone to cherish and celebrate in the history of the Church and ecumenism, another national and ecclesial boundary crossing occurred among the two major Protestant confessional families little more than two centuries prior to it. This ecumenical enterprise is generally unknown or overlooked, if not ignored. This less known ecumenical undertaking brought together the Lutherans and the Anglicans in launching the Madras Mission, aka "English Mission" in 1728, during a spell of confessional rivalry among the Lutherans and Anglicans were quite intense and atin its apexes in Europe. The architect of this great ecumenical initiative was Benjamin Schultze (1689-1760), a German Lutheran missionary, who served in Tamil Nadu, India from 1719 to 1743. This article argues in spite of the conflicts and controversies he had to endure in Tranquebar and Madras, Schultze played a pivotal role in establishing Protestant Christianity in Madras through developing an ecumenical paradigm that endured for more than a century and contributed immensely to the fledgling Protestant Church in Madras. Knowing the limitation of the remotely located Tranquebar to reach the entire India, he had meticulously worked toward convincing the English to start the "English Mission" in Madras. The unending controversies he suffered with his fellow missionaries and the constant mistrust and rebuttal from the Mission Collegium regarding decisions he made in critical circumstances, only augmented his decision to move from Tranquebar to Madras and to found the "English Mission".

Keywords: Danish-Halle Mission, Ecumenism, English Mission, Lutheran Mission, Madras Mission, Schultze, SPCK, Tranquebar

Explorations in ecumenical ventures have been one of the well-known features of Protestant Christianity in India. The Anglican initiative to unite with non-Anglican churches in the first quarter of the twentieth century resulted in the formation of the Church of South India (CSI) in 1947. The CSI was the organic union of the Anglicans, Congregationalists, Methodists, and Presbyterians. The formation of CSI has been applauded as a landmark in the history of Ecumenism and emulated in church union ventures in several regions of the globe. In this much celebrated ecumenical venture, the Anglicans played a leading role. While the formation of CSI is arguably an incredible milestone to cherish and celebrate in the history of the

Church, another national and ecclesial boundary crossing that occurred among the two major Protestant confessional families little more than two centuries prior to it, is generally unknown or overlooked, if not ignored. This less known ecumenical undertaking brought together the Lutherans and the Anglicans in launching the Madras Mission, *aka* "English Mission" in 1728, during a spell of confessional rivalry among the Lutherans and Anglicans were quite intense and at its apex in Europe. The architect of this great ecumenical initiative was Benjamin Schultze (1689-1760), a German Lutheran missionary, who served in Tamil Nadu, India from 1719 to 1743.

However, in the annals of Christianity, the significance of Schultze's contributions to church and society, particularly toward bringing collaboration between the two major Protestant confessional families and nations, have been either overlooked or minimized in order to accentuate the achievements of his predecessors and successors. For instance, Wilhelm Germann, who authored in 1865 a monograph on Johann Philipp Fabricius (1711-1791), the immediate successor of Schultze in the Madras Mission,[1] openly states that the purpose of his book was to prove that Schultze did more harm to mission and Fabricius had greater achievements in the annals of the mission history.[2] On the other hand, while much has been written about Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (1682-1719) and Christian Friedrich Schwartz (1726-1798) of the Tranquebar Mission, the one responsible for the works of Ziegenbalg to take deep roots in Tamil Nadu and for Christian Frederick Schwartz to commit to mission work and get the basic language and ministerial skills, namely Benjamin Schultze, is virtually unknown to the students of Christianity in India.[3] I argue in this article that in spite of the conflicts and controversies Schultze had to endure, he played a pivotal role in establishing Protestant Christianity in Madras through developing an ecumenical paradigm that endured for more than a century and contributed immensely to the fledgling Protestant Church in Madras. Before we examine the contextual realities of Schultze in establishing the new ecumenical paradigm, let me make some brief remarks about his work in Tranquebar.

When Schultze came to Tranquebar in 1719, the Tranquebar Mission was in a crisis.[4] Ziegenbalg, the pioneer of the mission, passed away on February 23, 1719. Johann Ernst Gründler (1677- 1720), who succeeded Ziegenbalg as the head of the mission, was physically so frail to lead the infant church and the Danish-Halle Mission anymore. He breathed his last on March 19, 1720. Schultze and his associates were in Indian soil only for about six months by then. Gründler's decision to ordain Schultze on January 31, 1720, proved to be a perceptive move as this facilitated Schultze to assume the leadership of mission after Gründler's passing away. For the next seven

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[1] After 1996 Madras was renamed Chennai. To be historically accurate I retain the name during the colonial period.

[2] W. Germann's description of Schultze as arrogant and tyrant leader, stayed in the mind of those who talked about Schultze later. For further details refer to Wilhelm Germann, 1865: 89-90.

[3] Germann's book on Schwartz also belittled the contributions of Schultze. (Germann, 1870). Grafe (1967: 41-58) was the first one to bring to light the significance of Schultze to the History of Christianity in India in his article in 1969. In the 1990s Liebau has done significant work on the significance of Schultze. Liebau's most significant work in English besides several works in German is, Liebau, 1995: 101-118.

[4] The Danish-Halle Mission started working in Tranquebar, a Danish colony in India from 1706. Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau (1676-1746) were the pioneering missionaries.

years, Schultze not only held the mission-work together but also led Tranquebar Mission to reach new heights. Taking into consideration the mission was infected with conflict among the missionaries, the local colonial authorities were indifferent if not ill-disposed to mission work, and the ongoing tension with the Mission Collegium in Copenhagen regarding the way mission to be carried out, Schultze's achievements in consolidating the church and mission work in Tranquebar were remarkable. His entrepreneurial leadership and industriousness enabled the mission to reach new heights in several areas. The following is a snapshot of his accomplishments in Tranquebar.

The translation of the Bible, devotional and liturgical books took precedence, though he did not neglect the school, catechizing, preaching, and dialoguing with people of other faiths, the mission paradigm for which the Tranquebar Mission was well known. For his translation work he made use of the best assistance available, including that of Peter Maleiappen.[5] Remarkable among the translation work he brought about were the completion of Tamil translation of the Bible, starting with the book of Ruth, including the Apocrypha, thus completing the translation of the Bible in Tamil began by Ziegenbalg and the Tamil Hymn Book that contained 116 hymns. The educational work during Schultze's Tranquebar tenancy had experienced significant growth. When he left Tranquebar in 1726, in twenty-one schools 575 pupils were enrolled (Vethanayagamony, 2010: 140). This incredible growth was possible because of the cordial relationship Schultze had cultivated and conserved with the local governor. The innovative methods Schultze adopted to catechize this many schoolchildren with limited resources, through developing adages akin to Tamil culture that had the basic catechetical contents, were noteworthy.

Schultze did not neglect the task of propagandizing and dialoguing with people of other faiths in Tranquebar either. He regularly went on evangelization outings along with the schoolchildren and the local Tamil catechists. The steady increase in the congregation bore witness to Schultze's evangelistic efforts. His efforts to convert the famous potter Vedappan were remarkable.[6] In his dialogue with people of other faith traditions, he focused especially on their polytheism and idolatry. However, he did not record in detail the content of his dialogues with the Hindus.[7] The intentionality of Schultze in taking the Gospel beyond the frontiers of Tranquebar was evident in the relationship he built with the royal family of the Tanjore Kingdom. The Tanjore Kingdom hitherto banned Christian missionaries finally opened its doors for the commencement of Protestant mission work because of the relationship Schultze had

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[5] Maleiappen was a gifted linguist and was of great assistance in the translation projects of Ziegenbalg. He had visited Germany with Ziegenbalg.

[6] Vedappan was a Hindu mendicant and a devotee of snake goddess. He practiced extreme austerities, including walking with a nail-fixed sandals. His sandal is available in the archives of the -Francke Foundations, Halle, Germany. [delete the additional article]

[7] Since Schultze believed that the content of his conversations only repeated what Ziegenbalg had already reported he did not record them. Other factors, such as the cold reception of Ziegenbalg's religious research by Halle, and the Mission Collegium's policy that missionaries should only focus their efforts on the preaching of the Gospel, help to explain the limited energy Schultze devoted to the research of Indian religions. However, he did not fail to report anything that had not been previously recounted.

developed with Telungarasa. [8] Though he personally could not visit Tanjore during his tenure in Tranquebar, his immediate successor, Christian Friedrich Pressier (1697-1738), was able to visit there in 1728 and later Schwartz laid strong foundation for Protestant congregations in Tanjore.

In spite of the above mentioned Schultze's achievements, his tenure in Tranquebar has been depicted as unproductive because of the conflicts he was drawn into. His critics have claimed that Lutheranism began to flourish only after he left Tranquebar. However, a close examination of the sources presents a different picture. Between the years 1719-1725 Schultze published twenty titles in Portuguese, Danish, and in Tamil. Noteworthy among them were *History of the Passion*, *Thorough Instruction in Holy Communion*, the *Danish Book of Communion*, a second edition of the Tamil Hymn book with forty-eight hymns entitled *Hymnorum liber Damulic,* the enlarged Tamil Hymnbook with 160 hymns called, *Hymnologia Damulica,* Thomas à Kempis' *the Imitation of Christ* in Portuguese and sermons at the funerals of Ziegenbalg and Gründler. The congregation too showed steady numerical growth. Every year new members were added to the congregation- thirty-two in 1720, eighteen in 1721, fifteen in 1723, twenty-eight in 1724, and twenty-three in 1725 to make a total of 176 members in the Tamil congregation and 150 in the Portuguese congregation (Lehman, 1956: 116). To this were, added the pastoral and administrative responsibilities toward the congregation and the schoolchildren. Considering the fact that the missionaries were quite new to the circumstances and that his colleagues were uncooperative and did not contribute much to the work, Schultze's achievements were certainly significant.

Nonetheless Schultze was a person of larger vision. He ensured that the evangelization efforts were expanded far beyond the borders of the remote Danish colony in India. He waited for new missionary personnel, Martin Bosse (d. 1750), Christian Friedrich Pressier (1697-1738), and Christopher Theodosius Walther (1680-1764) to arrive at Tranquebar to continue the work in Tranquebar. After orienting them to the work in Tranquebar he moved to the strategic center, Madras. Madras was the hub of South India.[9]

The complex circumstances that led to the total involvement of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK), an Anglican missionary society, in Schultze's "English Mission" in 1728 merit close attention. In the midst of mounting

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[8] Telungarasa was the uncle of the Tanjore King. The Tranquebar missionaries were prohibited from entering the Tanjore Kingdom. However, Schultze corresponded with Telungarasa and sent gifts. This was the beginning of a cordial relationship with the Tanjore kingdom. Thereafter, the Indian evangelists were able to go and introduce Lutheranism there. Later in the days of Schwartz, Lutheranism flourished there. The SPCK was so well pleased about the spade work Schultze had done in terms of establishing good relations with the influential families, wrote, "The Account you gave to the College at Copenhagen of your correspondence with the King of Tanjour's Brother, was very pleasing to the Society, and they hope you will continue to cultivate it by all prudent Methods, as the Examples of persons of his rank are most likely to have a powerful Influence on the Heathen Natives." For further details refer to Letter to Dal and Schultze from H Newman dated January 28, 1725, SPCK Archives Reel 36 Special Subjects, Part D.

[9] Since Madras is considered hub of South India even today all South Indians are referred to as *Madrasis* by the North Indians.

confessional rivalry between Lutheran and Anglican communions, the progress both Lutherans and Anglicans made in the initial days of this laudable ecumenical venture is incredible. Though the circumstances and reasons for moving to Madras from Tranquebar triggered controversies in Europe, this shift opened up a new epoch in Lutheran-Anglican ecumenical relationships as well as Halle-London missional connections that lasted for more than a century. Against the wishes and objections of the Mission Collegium in Copenhagen, and to some extent Halle, Schultze initiated this effort in ecumenical alliance. He readily declined the Copenhagen Mission Collegium's offer of a better position in Europe if he returned to Europe by the next ship, deserting the "English Mission." In his response to the letter containing this offer, he made his ecumenical plea and imploration, "I appeal to the whole Protestant Christendom...."[10] The SPCK, an Anglican Missionary society, did not question the validity of his non-Episcopal ordination,[11] and confessional background but accepted him as its missionary, in spite of the petition from Copenhagen not to do so.

The stressful situation in the mission field led to bitter conflicts between Schultze and his missionary cohorts in Tranquebar. To begin with, it was a continuation of the conflict that began in the days of Gründler. While Schultze worked in closer cooperation with Gründler, the other two associates, Nikolaus Dal (1690-1747) and Johann Heinrich Kistenmacher (1693-1722), had developed sharp disagreements with Gründler. This discord became most blatant during the days of Schultze. Though Schultze cannot be fully exonerated for the conflict, the sources strongly suggest that Schultze's leadership or his temperament were not solely to be blamed. The insubordination of the associates and their cynicism over the authority exercised by Schultze played a significant role in intensifying the conflict. In the midst of conflict, ambiguity and crisis, Schultze made bold moves for the advancement of the mission, following some acceptable legality.[12] For instance, he called for a local consistory to make decision when definite direction from Copenhagen did not arrive on time.[13] The legality of Schultze's request that the colonial authorities bring solutions to the issues faced in the day-to-day operation of the mission was questioned, putting Schultze into a vulnerable position.

Schultze had a far-reaching ecumenical vision, namely to introduce Protestant Christian faith all over India with the help of other Europeans, especially by enlisting more commitment on the part of the English. Hence, he entered into extensive correspondence with the English living in various parts of India as well as in England. He was in regular correspondence with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the King

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[10] "*Ich appliere an der ganzen Protestantischen Christenheit.*" Schultze to G.A. Francke 31 January 1729, AFSt II H 3:14.

[11] The Anglican Church considered only episcopally ordained minister to be valid minister. In the 20th century church union negotiations leading to the formation of CSI, the negotiation prolonged for twenty-seven long years on account of issues related to the question of episcopacy.

[12] He called for a consortium consisting of the visiting chaplains and the local governor.

[13] On July 24, 1720 the governor called for a consistory to meet and ordered Kistenmacher to appear before it. The consistory that met from July 25 to August 5, 1720 consisted of Oluf Lygaard, the representative of the governor; two Danish colonial chaplains, Jacob Clementine and Jonas Schmidt; the ship chaplain Jacob Worm and Nikolaus Dal, representing the mission.

of England.[14] Knowing the limitation of the remotely located Tranquebar to reach the entire India, he maintained a good relationship with the governors of two neighboring British settlements, Cuddalore and Madras, with a view to expanding the work at an appropriate time. Finding that the English were inclined to support the mission work, he decided to leave Tranquebar, after he provided a basic orientation to the work and context for the new missionaries who arrived in 1725. The unending controversies he suffered with his fellow missionaries and the constant mistrust and rebuttal from the Mission Collegium regarding decisions he made in critical circumstances, only augmented his decision to move from Tranquebar to Madras and to found the "English Mission". After handing over the work at Tranquebar to Bosse on February 25, 1726, Schultze sailed to Madras via Cuddalore.

The idea of establishing a mission station in Madras had been considered since 1710 by various people who came into contact with Madras. The governors and the chaplains working for the British East India Company in Madras repeatedly requested that England start a charity school and establish a church there. The SPCK explored the possibility of sending English missionaries to either Madras or other British territories. The early Tranquebar missionaries had attempted to start a mission station in Madras since Ziegenblag visited Madras in 1710. Gründler intensified this effort. However, the dream of beginning the mission took fruition only in 1728 thanks to Schultze's relentless efforts. He went to Madras in 1726, did decisive exploratory works, took six months exploratory journey and persuaded the SPCK to enter into such an endeavour.

During his six-month exploratory journey to Madras, Schultze adopted the local customs and a very simple dress code, ate available Indian food and walked unlike his predecessors who travel by palanquin. The people, who saw him on foot, eating the local food and clothed in Indian style, were naturally drawn to him. He wrote, "The people were surprised to see me traveling on foot, and eating my rice from a leaf, as the common people do on their journeys" (Schultze, 1858: 4). E.R. Baierlein, commenting on Schultze's adaptation of the local customs, remarked:

Schultze's crockery consisted of a leaf-plate, a number of leaves, stitched together with thorn-like needles.... He had brought with him one article of luxury- a spoon.... His food was rice and curry as it is prepared by natives plentifully supplied with red pepper, and not free of sand, which grates between the teeth (Baierlein, 1875: 150-151).

During his travel he slept under trees and stayed in small huts when no local inn was available in interior rural areas. He wrote on April 7, 1726, "We would get no one to receive us into their huts; till, at the extremity of the village, an old woman who, with her two sons and some pigs, lived in a straw hovel, allowed me space sufficient to spread my mat on the sand; and there I passed the night" (Schultze, 1858: 8-9). In spite of the clear plan to enlist English support for the new mission, at this point, he considered this mission trip to be the "extension of the Royal Danish Mission... at Madras, in the English territory" (Schultze, 1858: 37).

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[14] This will be discussed in detail later.

Schultze carried on regular correspondence with the King of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the SPCK to persuade them to support the proposed new mission. In order to convince the Archbishop of Canterbury to support the Madras Mission, he wrote, "All seems to me as yet to be in its first Rise and tenderness. We perceive it is the finger of God, but the Harvest is great and if we care to send missionaries everywhere, we cannot leave Madraspatnam and Children entire destitute of Teachers."[15] It was probably with the hope of attracting the Anglicans in general and securing the Archbishop's approval for the mission in Madras, and to demonstrate his earnestness to incorporate Anglican tenets in the mission that he translated the *Book of Common Prayer* into Tamil and dedicated it to the Archbishop of Canterbury. He sent a copy of it to the Archbishop saying:

I thought it would be very useful if, after the Malabarick Bibles are quite done, I translated into Malabarick your Liturgy commonly call'd Common Prayer Book. I have sent you a copy of it, Most Revd. Father, and I beg you will be pleas'd to accept favourable the present as Little as it is (Ibid.).

In his letter to King George I of England, after a brief description of his work in Madras and presenting prospects for the future of the mission work, he pleaded with the king to start the "English Mission", saying, "I have the greatest Confidence in the Infinite Mercy of God, that this small Beginning may lay the Foundation of a glorious Building to be raised hereafter. Therefore, I return unto God my most humble thanks and implore your Majesty for a most gracious order to establish this Good beginning."[16] In consequence he left no stones unturned to persuade Anglicans and the English in influential positions to commit themselves to the new mission.

In his letter to the SPCK, he expressed his vision for the proposed mission. He made it clear that what he was trying to offer was only a head-start of an enterprise that the English would continue.

The English Gentlemen have given many good proof [s] thereof already, their Deals of Charity being well known to the Christian World, and several of them would be glad, that some of their own Countrymen were sent over as Missionaries, who with a Christian Resignation and Zeal would undertake the Conversion of Souls. In the meantime the Missionaries at Tranquebar [are] themselves obliged to offer their Assistance, if they receive any Orders for it.[17]

He supposed that the strategic location of Madras had the advantage of reaching out conveniently to the entire India.

If all things towards propagating the Gospel in these places are well regulated, all

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[15] Schultze's Letter to the Archbishop dated December 12, 1726. SPCK Archives Microfilm Reel 35 Volume III.

[16] Schultze's Letter to the King George I dated December 16, 1726. SPCK Archives Microfilm Reel 35 Volume III.

[17] Schultze's Letter to Mr. Rupertini and Ziegenhagen dated July 19, 1726. SPCK Archives Microfilm Reel 35 Volume III.

villages in the Dominion of the Great Moghul will likewise have the Benefit of it, for it will be an easy matter for a missionary to spend one or more Days every Week among them, to make the Gospel known unto them (Ibid.).

The new mission, indeed, was envisioning a missionary initiative that reaches far beyond Madras.

Schultze was well-aware of the strategic importance of Madras for the Christianization of the whole of South India, if not India, as against the remotely located Danish colony of Tranquebar. Madras was a British territory and a prominent port, connecting with the rest of India and Europe. In his letter to the SPCK seeking their help to begin the "English Mission" he wrote,

The field upon which the Word of God should be sown, according to the Will of our most Gracious King, is not the narrow Compass of Ground in and about Tranquebar, but the whole Heathenish World, which the Heavenly Father hath given to his Son for an Inheritance.[18]

Enlisting the involvement of the British at this juncture proved in future years to be advantageous for the cause of the Protestant churches in South India. Schultze played a pivotal role in developing a pragmatic ecumenical mission, an archetype that ran for the next two centuries and provides a framework for twenty-first-century ecumenical efforts.

Nonetheless, Schultze saw in the initiative of the SPCK to establish the "English Mission" a possibility for the beginning of a large ecumenical undertaking. He hoped to unite several European Protestant nations to evangelize several British settlements in India. He expressed this great ecumenical vision when he wrote:

God is now ready to make the Honoble [sic] Society his Instruments for promoting the same good Design in the English Factories, which hath been done hitherto by the Honoble [sic] Danish College at Tranquebar. Oh! That my desires could be fulfilled to see all Protestant Christians animated with a fervent Zeal to assist one another in manifesting the Christian Religion among the Heathen. If the Kings and Princes of the Protestant Religion would take it to Heart and Support, some Missionaries might settle in many Places, as at Madras, Cudulur, Bengal, Bombay etc. This Undertaking see'd to be of so great Concern even in the time of Mr. Ziegenbalg that some Friends proposed it should be laid before the Diet at Ratisbon, in order to have it supported by all Protestant States; and yet the mission at Tranquebar had then but some small Beginnings, whereas now the Undertaking having had a prosperous Success....[19]

His vision was to found an across-the-board Protestant Mission that would bring

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[18] Abstract of a Letter sent by B. Schultze to Mr. Ruperati and Martini dated at Madras July 19, 1726. SPCK Archives Microfilm Reel 35 Volume III.
[19] Schultze's Letter to Ruperati and Martini dated December 10, 1728. SPCK Archives Microfilm Reel 35 Volume III.

different European nations together in the service of evangelization. He reiterated his musing in another letter to the SPCK:

If my wish was according to God's will, then it is my humble intention that from now on we must begin to work towards the formation of a general Protestant Mission.... Regarding this my question now is whether I should write from here to some high Protestant authorities, proposing to them the importance of the matter and the easiest means to achieve it. Without becoming specific about the imperial cities, it would be necessary to write letters to the Royal Majesty of Sweden, likewise to the Royal Majesty of Prussia, likewise to some princely elites in Germany [the diet in Regensburg], and to the wealthy states in the Netherlands. .... If the leaders are able to offer residency to so many hundred preachers in their home countries, it would not be of great effort to support about 2 to 4 more. When it is presented to them in a diplomatic way, I have no doubt that they will take up the humble thought....The highly wealthy states of Holland will certainly not deny it. The Hamburg Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.A.) is willingly offering to support four missionaries. Our missionaries may gather congregations from all the Protestant places in India, also in Moguls region and China. (cited in Germann, 1865: 113).

To a great extent, the zeal Schultze found in the Roman Catholic missionaries and their ability to spread over to interior places in India challenged him to start the work in a strategic center like Madras. In his letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, he wrote, "The Romish missionaries, sported with blind Zeal, have spread themselves everywhere like a plague ...."[20] He wanted to make the Christian Faith available to the Indians at large from a tactical hub by enlisting the total involvement of the English. In the light of this, being well aware of Halle's uneasiness to transcend confessional boundaries and the contention among some of the Anglicans about supporting the Lutheran missionaries, Schultze took a leap of faith to persuade the SPCK to commit to a dual mission endeavor. From his perspective, there was an intentional decision to move to Madras to facilitate cooperation among the Protestants with the hope that "service unites and doctrine divides." The ever-intensifying conflicts among the missionaries in Tranquebar only accelerated his resolution.

The founding of the "English Mission" marked a great ecumenical advance. Though cooperation between Lutheran Pietists and Anglicans, represented by the SPCK, was established as early as 1710, it was marginal and sporadic. The Tranquebar Mission remained the sole endeavor of Lutherans, for which some financial and material support came from the SPCK intermittently and without any administrative and contractual engagement. On the other hand, through the founding of the "English Mission", Schultze inaugurated a pragmatic ecumenism in which the Anglicans owned the missionary work in India, gave guidance and coaching, and received accounts and reports. The Lutheran Pietists continued to supply the mission personnel and some financial support. On August 16, 1728, Schultze was accepted as a missionary of the Anglican mission, strengthening the tie with the Anglican Church. Schultze

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[20] Schultze's Letter to the Archbishop dated December 12, 1726. SPCK Archives Microfilm Reel 35 Volume III.

was well accepted as an ordained minister and was invited to celebrate the Eucharist according to the Anglican tradition, though he did not have Episcopal ordination. Schultze inaugurated an ecumenical paradigm that lasted for at least two centuries, in which German Lutherans provided the human resources for Anglican missionary societies working not only in India but also in other parts of the world.

The European milieu in which Schultze worked to bring about this innovative and pragmatic ecumenical paradigm was not entirely favorable to such an innovation. He was working in a time when the conservative Anglican clergy viewed the Lutherans as sectarians and considered the Lutheran ministry invalid. When George I was crowned as the King of England in 1714, the initial cordial welcome quickly turned out to be a heated debate between Lutherans and Anglicans. (Brett, 1714: 9-19).[21] Eventually, the debate revolved around three things: liturgy, theology, and ecclesiology. Liturgically, there seemed considerable agreement that the Church of England stood closer to Lutherans than to Presbyterians; theologically, Anglican doctrine stood closer to Reformed Tradition, especially with regard to the issue of Christ's presence in the sacrament; ecclesiologically, the Church of England stood clearly apart from both Lutherans and Presbyterians, who lacked the historic episcopate.[22] Schultze's deliberations to further the common Christian causes should be understood in the context of this acrimonious debate by the Anglican conservatives on one side and the moderates who had sympathy for the Lutherans on the other side. While the conservatives wanted to safeguard the Anglican purity, there were others who sought a new kind of piety.

On the other hand, the Lutherans were not in favor of introducing any Anglican elements into the emerging Indian church. They preferred the maintenance of an uncompromised Lutheran faith. In the letter to the missionaries, C. B. Michaelis from Halle wrote:

One has to make every effort to treat the English nation with respect and to behave towards them moderately and wisely, that they may not find the least reason to go back on their affection and goodwill. However, on the other hand, you should also

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[21] Thomas Brett, argued that, "reconciliation between Anglicans and foreign Protestants" was "altogether impracticable," because they would not acquiesce in the restoration of episcopacy, the "great controverted [sic] point... betwixt them and us." He added, "Since Lutherans have 'mere presbyters' or superintendents, if we do allow their Ordinations, then we obliquely overthrow the whole Episcopal Church to allow any for lawful Pastors, who are not Episcopally ordain'd." He further argued that the doctrine of the ubiquity of the body of Christ, though Luther affirmed the doctrine of consubstantiation, is incompatible with Anglican doctrine, which did not confuse substance in affirming two inseparable natures. Though he agreed that Lutherans with Anglicans rejected the doctrine of predestination, Brett maintained that Lutherans "are nevertheless strict and rigid Presbyterians, and have as little agreement with the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of England, as the most zealous Calvinist." For further details refer to Brett, 1714: 8, 15, 17, 43. Cited in Brunner, 1993: 211.
[22] The extremists did not see the lack of an Episcopate in Germany as a sad historic accident but as an unacceptable deviation from the Roman Catholic tradition and truth. But the moderates, while they affirmed the necessity of episcopal ordination in England, refused to invalidate the ordinations of foreign Protestants, seeing the historic episcopate as of the *bene esse* but not the *esse* of a Christian Church. *Esse* in Anglican ecclesiology stands for that which is of the essence of the very existence of the life of the church, whereas *bene esse* stands for that which is of benefit for the life of the church.

take care not to do something trying to please everyone which would bring vile gossip in Denmark and in the Lutheran Church (cited in Germann, 1865: 131).

Though Schultze was well aware of the anti-ecumenical stand in both Lutheran and Anglican camps, he boldly launched his idea of establishing an ecumenical mission in Madras, and solicited the support of the SPCK. The adverse climate only made Schultze work all the more diligently for two years to convince the English people living in Madras as well as in England of the possibility of a joint venture. Schultze survived these two years that were filled with uncertainty and challenges primarily because of the relationships he built, and the trust he enjoyed, with Governor James Macrae (1677-1874) and the English Chaplain William Leeke (d. 1728), and the unflinching support he received from them. Meanwhile, he continued to solicit the support of Protestant Christian leaders in Europe. Finally, what once appeared to be impossible became a reality, when the SPCK decided to accept his proposal to establish the "English Mission" in 1728. His commitment to the new ecumenical venture was such that even when Denmark promised him a better position if he deserted the "English Mission," and returned to Europe, he decided to continue in and to offer the same service to the English he offered to the Danes. The Mission Collegium's letter ended with an assurance, "that his several years of hard work would be compensated with a suitable reward." [23] He had made a conscious decision to continue the mission work in Madras rather than enjoy the reward he very well deserved. He wrote to the SPCK:

The particular Circumstances of this new Work obliges my Stay in these Parts some time longer, rather than accept profitable letter to return home; for by my letters in high German, directed to the honoble [sic] Society, you will observe that the Honble [sic] College at Copenhagen have permitted me to return to home according to my Desire, with Permission of retaliation for the heavy Service done to them in the Mission for these Ten years past, yet by the honoble [sic] Society's Desire, I have rather made the choice to do the same Service, with the Assistance of the Almighty, to the English Nation as I have done the Danes,... [24]

The Mission Collegium was furious about Schultze's response and tried its best to dismantle the newly started Madras Mission. They wrote to Frederick Michael Ziegenhagen (1694-1776), an influential member of the SPCK and Lutheran court preacher for the Hanoverian King George I of Great Britain, to request the SPCK not to take Schultze into the SPCK service.[25] Since, the SPCK had already moved ahead with their decision to begin the Madras Mission, they could not do much. Schultze as a result of this development and bitter exchange severed his connections with the Mission Collegium in Copenhagen and became a fulltime missionary of the SPCK, which paid him 60 pounds a year from the date of his appointment. The new status of Schultze meant not only the official beginning of a new mission but also the

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[23] Mission Collegium to Schultze November 15, 1727. Leipzig Mission Archives, Box 12.
[24] Schultze's Letter to Mr. Newman dated December 5, 1728. SPCK Archives Microfilm Reel 35, Volume III.
[25] Cellarius Letter to Ziegenhagen dated April 4, 1730. AFSt I C 6:67.

beginning of a new type of ecumenical cooperation between Anglicans and Lutherans in the history of the church. Though Halle was hesitant to approve Schultze, it did not reject it either. The Madras Mission eventually developed into a three-cornered arrangement between Madras, London and Halle.

The "English Mission" proved to be of great significance in the history of Protestant Christianity in India. It marked the establishing of Protestant Christianity in the British territory of Madras. Schultze extended his sphere of activities beyond the Tamil-speaking circles. He pioneered Christian missionary work among the Telugu-speaking people and the Urdu-speaking Muslims in Madras and its neighborhood. Hence, we may say, Schultze well deserved the honor of being called the pioneer missionary of the Madras Mission. The multi-linguistic city of Madras was a beneficiary of Schultze's ministry, who had exceptional skills to learn languages swiftly and interact with people who spoke different languages.

The educational work of the mission served three linguistic groups, though it had only limited success in comparison with the Tranquebar Mission. The church that emerged in Madras was multi-lingual, made up of primarily *Dalits*. The mission developed to be not just the sole enterprise of Europeans. Rather, the local Christians began to be involved in it increasingly, though none of the Indian helpers were ordained during Schultze's tenure. They served as intermediaries between the missionaries and the local people, and without them the Madras Mission would not have survived.

The pragmatic ecumenism initiated by Schultze lasted for more than a century. In this mutually beneficial form of ecumenism, the German Lutheran missionaries provided the workforce for both the Anglican and non-Anglican missionary societies of British origin and affiliation. This became the norm of the mission world not only in India but also in several African Countries such as Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Kenya, and Namibia, where the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), Church Missionary Society (CMS), Basel Missionary Society, and London Missionary Society (LMS) operated respectively. During the SPCK's years of operation in India (1728-1825) all missionaries employed by the SPCK, except for A. T. Clarke, were German Lutherans, and most of them came from Halle. (Brunner, 1993: 122). Though the SPCK was very much fond of appointing ministers ordained according to Anglican rites as missionaries, they recognized the Lutheran ordained ministers as valid, though irregular. (Cnattingius, 1952: 38-54. It was only in 1825 that this remarkable arrangement came to an end. (Clark, 1959: 59-76).

In conclusion we may say the establishment of the Madras Mission in 1728 was a significant landmark in the history of Protestant Christianity in India. Through the vision and initiative of Schultze and the willingness of the SPCK an ecumenical mission was initiated when the SPCK accepted Schulltze as their missionary. This was sealed by the subsequent appointment of Sartorius in 1730 and Geister in 1732, two Lutherans from Halle, to serve in the Madras Mission. Schultze arguably a visionary and farsighted leader as Fenger observes:

... he was yet a man of much power to whom it was easy to learn foreign languages

and who also had the wish to do so. In talent he was far above his colleagues, the sickly Kistenmacher and the dilatory Dal, and he therefore became the head of the mission and behaved very nobly in the difficult circumstances under which he was called to independent action (Fenger, 1906: 109).

His entrepreneurial initiative and self-reliance enabled the mission to survive as well as to advance in quite a few fronts. Unquestionably, the establishment of the Madras Mission in 1728 was a significant landmark in the history of Protestant Christian mission.

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Subaltern Counterpublics: Dalits and Missionary Christianity in Kerala

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Abstract

In this paper I wish to initiate an analysis of certain experiences of nineteenth and twentieth century Kerala particularly in the context of the Protestant missionary Christianity and its interface with Dalits to think through the ways in which a new public sphere emerged creating possibilities for the articulation of new ideas and perspectives of life that could be broadly referred to as social imaginaries, following, Charles Taylor (Taylor, 2003). Such new social imaginaries were significant in their defining of a possible good life that had a decisive effect on the lives of the slave castes in the succeeding decades[1]. (Hunt, 1920: 191-206) Articulated in every day context of the exclusive congregations of slaves, the new ideas represented in the Bible became a powerful resource for the oppressed castes. The slave castes began to use the ideas derived from the Bible to organize their everyday life and their congregational gatherings created a public space which was not available to them in their past. Additionally, with the gradual spread of literacy they began to read the scriptures and subsequently print their own texts although that happened only in the twentieth century. In fact, such endeavors created an oppositional subaltern counterpublics in Kerala.

Key words: subaltern counterpublics, public sphere, Dalits, modernity, Christianity, Kerala

In contemporary social theory the concept of public sphere is used to analyze and understand the emergence of modern citizenry and civil society. However, as these debates evolved, it became clear that the dominant bourgeois public sphere could not accommodate the desires and opinions of women and the subordinated social groups that could be marked out as different from the dominant bourgeois public sphere. The bourgeois public sphere has been evolved out of the particular historical transformation that Western European society had undergone giving rise to the modern social classes based on nascent capitalism that threw up powerful classes that could eventually create the necessary paraphernalia, including the symbolic that allowed them to evolve as the harbinger of modernity (Habermas, 1993)[2]. It was in this process that the idea of public was formulated, which was

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[1] Even in the mid nineteenth century while still being enslaved the missionaries interacted with the slave castes observed their spirit of resilience. (Hunt, 1920:191-206)

[2] Habermas provides a path breaking analysis of the category of Bourgeois Public Sphere in the European context, which determined the subsequent research on public sphere.

different from the notion of private signifying the power attached to the notion of public.

Because of the exclusionary nature of bourgeois public sphere that did not accord the same significance to women and the subordinated classes, it was felt necessary to critique the idea of bourgeois public sphere. The ideal bourgeois public sphere did not offer a space for the subordinated to offer their visions of the world. It is in this context that the notion of multiple publics was introduced[3] (Fraser, 1990: 56-80.). Multiple publics would enable critical free discussions inviting those who are not represented in the ideal bourgeois public sphere. Such a theorization was occasioned not just due to the pragmatic convenience, but it owed to the analytical rigor it offered. Subsequent engagement with the concept of public sphere has indicated the need for understanding public sphere in its plurality, giving rise to the notion of multiple publics[4]. (Squires, 2002: 446-68; Asen, 2000: 424-46).

This multiplicity of public spheres offers possibilities according to Nancy Fraser for a category of subaltern counterpublics. In her evocative phrase, it is 'formed under conditions of dominance and subordination' (Fraser, 1990: 70). She further argues, "subaltern counterpublics… are parallel discourse arena where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretation of their identities, interests and needs (Fraser, 1990: 67). She considers the concept subaltern counterpublics significant in the analysis of stratified societies (Fraser, 1990: 67) More importantly, Fraser refers to the dual character of subaltern counterpublics in stratified societies in which they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment (Fraser, 1990: 68). They are thought of as training ground for agitational activities directed towards wider publics. Emancipatory potential of this lies in the dialectics of these two positions (Fraser, 1990: 68).

Religion has been identified as a force to be reckoned with when the idea of public sphere is analyzed today (Mendita and Van Antwerpen, 2011). While most of the debates in the area of public sphere began with the European historical examples, there is substantial research on the formation of public sphere in non-European societies (Chatterjee, 2008: 165-78). We do find extension of the conceptual categories, generated in the debates on public sphere in the European context to analyze similar phenomenon in non-European societies.

Emergence of Public Sphere in the context of Missionary intervention

The subaltern counterpublics gradually evolved in the mid nineteenth century Kerala through the interaction of the Protestant missionaries and slave castes (in contemporary critical writings, Dalits). The scions of landed caste families who

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[3] The idea of multiple publics is thought to be fundamental in understanding the idea of public sphere as it existed in "actually existing" Democracies.

[4] There has been a lot of research in this area of social theory particularly foregrounding the question of multiple nature of the "actually existing "democracies and public spheres. (Squires, 2002: 446-468; Asen, 2000: 424-446).

had acquired colonial education dominated the colonial public sphere that gradually began to evolve from the second half of the nineteenth century. They had a history that goes back to the pre-colonial times. It may be noted that historically the public space in Kerala was highly restricted due to the caste ideology and the power of the caste elites that prevented the subordinated castes from accessing public space. In the mid nineteenth century Kerala the nascent institutions that signaled public sphere reproduced the elements of spatial restriction that made free interaction, let alone exchange of ideas impossible. The relative position of social groups and individuals in the caste hierarchy decided each one's access to space. Such a hierarchical claim to space decided both the social and spatial location of individuals and castes. Only caste elites could walk on the roads and all the rest had to use alleyways specifically meant for their respective castes. Similar restrictions were in place as far as the access to places of worship were also concerned. Those places of worship were not part of the public space as they were private spheres of the caste elites. It may be noted that the exclusive settlements of slave castes that were located far away from the landed castes, created enclaves of subaltern counterpublics subsequently.

The establishment of modern educational institutions beginning in 1815 with the support of the colonial administration and British missionaries on the one hand and the native state on the other catered to the requirements of the dominant castes, the Syrian Christians.[5] This was a project of modernity supported by the native ruler, the British resident as well as the missionaries. The only participation the slave castes such as the Pulayas had was that of labour as the government had released one hundred Pulaya slaves for the construction and other works on the mission land.

It is observed that while the College named as Cottayam College was primarily meant for training Syrian Christian clergy imparting them religious education, it was also engaged in secular education. The first center of English education in Kerala, it remained prohibited for the slave castes even after they became Christians joining the CMS congregations. It was after the split with the traditional Syrian Orthodox Church that the CMS missionaries established another college known today as CMS College, Kottayam in 1838 that played a major role in the reproduction of elites in the native state of Travancore. The new institution became essential to the missionary efforts in imparting modern English education. The upper caste natives irrespective of religious differences were admitted in this institution for higher studies. It was this educated class that later began to play a significant role in the emergent public sphere.

The Church Missionary Society diocese began to publish its official journal in Malayalam titled Jnana Nikshepam or Treasury of Knowledge in 1848. This journal became a medium that articulated new ideas. It carried articles on themes ranging from religion, science, and social sciences to literature and philosophy. The first

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[5] The denomination that benefited from this policy was the Syrian Orthodox Church and not Syrian Catholics. In fact, the Syrian Christian community is divided into different denominations. However, they remained historically as an upper caste, which did not cause pollution to Hindu upper castes.

half of the nineteenth century witnessed the development of printing in a considerable manner. Although there were instances of books being printed in Malayalam, it was the missionaries of the CMS who with their project of the Bible translation advanced much in the field. Benjamin Bailey, a pioneer British Missionary based in the southern town of Kottayam in Kerala translated New Testament in 1829 and subsequently the Old Testament in 1841 (Hunt, 1920: 70-77). The Book of Common Prayer was translated into Malayalam in 1839 and portions of which were in circulation[6] (Hunt, 1920: 77). In fact, we find portions of scriptures being printed separately and distributed. It seems that much of the religious tracts and portions of the scriptures used to be distributed freely.

Portions of scriptures such as The Gospel According to Saint Matthew were translated into Malayalam in 1848. The pride of place was given to the special printing of the Beatitude/ Sermon on the Mount in Malayalam, the native language of the region in 1849, with the interpretation rendered by of one of the prominent missionaries. These translations, in fact, were harbingers of the translation of the entire Bible and other religious books into Malayalam in the succeeding years. Although Christianity has had a long history in Kerala, the same can't be said about the translation of the Bible into Malayalam and its eventual circulation. With the effort of the Protestant missionaries gradually a reading public began to emerge although it was confined to the reading of scriptures to begin with. However, it had dissimilar effects on the different segments of the Anglican Communion. The Syrian Christians who continued with the CMS benefited much from these efforts as they became educated in the new institutions while the slave caste Christians had to wait for very long to benefit from the educational opportunities. Their literacy was limited to reading scriptures although literacy can't be restricted to a limited purpose.

In the mid nineteenth century there were several booklets in circulation within the CMS congregations that could be better thought of as means by which cultural translation of Protestant missionary Christianity was taking place.

Missionaries, both the European and the native, were certain about the effects of the newly printed texts and their circulation. Alongside translation and the printing of the scriptures, equally significant was the printing of non-religious books, especially that were required for the secular education. These publications catered to the requirements of a reading public that was slowly emerging in the Travancore region of Kerala. In spite of such constraints on the circulation of books, gradually there evolved a literate class, obviously drawn from the landed castes and Syrian Christians. Printing paper and books continued to be very expensive and therefore were not accessible to the poor people. Consequently, the public sphere thus emerged was already beset with exclusionary trends and inbuilt social hierarchy. This situation continued without much changes down to the first half of the twentieth century.

Although some of the printed materials were distributed freely, the books printed

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[6] Missionaries Thomas Norton and Benjamin Bailey translated portions of the book of Common Prayer into Malayalam. (Hunt, 1920: 72)

until early 1850's did not reach the slave castes as they were not yet literate. From the late 1840's we get references to the missionaries of the CMS engaging with the slave castes such as the Pulayas and the Parayas, although their numbers were very limited (Matthan, 1949). Around the same time the CMS missionaries began to teach the slave castes that was yet to develop as distinctive phenomenon. However, from the early 1850's the CMS missionaries began their systematic efforts to teach the slave castes and working among them (Hunt, 1920-180-203). It is important to remember that because of caste restrictions it was not possible for the untouchable slave castes to use the public roads, markets and other government institutions let alone get educated. They could not approach the police and judiciary even as they faced severe oppression and everyday forms of violence (Hawksworth, 1853). It may be noted that forms of structural violence that they were subjected to continued unabated even as late as the 1950's (Mathew, 2019: 126-31). Such continuing experiences of violence that the slave castes experienced makes it impossible to talk about the issues of 'public sphere' without addressing the question of social space in the caste society. I have argued elsewhere that in the caste society we find severe restriction of the social space, creating spatial inequality, forcing the slave castes outside the social space (Mohan, 2016). Similarly, they were also not given access to place as it remained under the control of the landlords. It may be pointed out that the landed castes confined them to the marginal spaces and places.

The absolute spatial control exercised by the landed castes continued as the new colonial institutions helped them reproduce their privileged position. Such a situation meant that the enslaved caste subalterns would find it difficult to lay claim to the resource that came along with colonial transformation. Modern English education is a case in point. The traditional literati became much more powerful with the coming of English education as they could easily occupy positions of power in the bureaucracy. Yet, they had to face challenges from the elite Brahmin bureaucrats who came from elsewhere in India occupied higher administrative positions of the native state of Travancore in Kerala. It was in opposition to such practices, that certain kind of public sphere of the upwardly mobile feudal classes began to emerge. It might be identified, as the early beginning of an elite public sphere in colonial native state where the traditional elite began to discuss about their political rights in the evolving new administrative structure (Jeffrey, 1994: 142-73). In contrast to the colonial middle class in Calcutta, which was instrumental in the creation of a colonial public sphere there, the upwardly mobile colonial middle class in Kerala lagged far behind comparatively in terms of resources (Jeffrey, 1994: 85-86). Yet, in the small towns and the capital of the native state of Travancore, Trivandrum, we may observe the gradual flourishing of an educated class that began to run literary and social associations (Menon, 2015: 64-83). Those were exclusive associations that were committed to the cause of the upper castes in their opposition to the 'foreign Brahmins' (non-Malayalam speaking Brahmins). However, such associations were not meant for opposing the monarchy to demand a different democratic form of government (Jeffrey, 1994: 101). In fact, the opposition to the government surprisingly came from some of the missionaries, who wrote to the Madras Government reams and reams of letters accusing the native government (Jeffrey,1994:42). Therefore, we do not find here

a possibility of wider rational discussions on the political matters evolving. However, what was evolving at that point of time was mostly confined to the opposition to the bureaucracy of the native state. Such activities culminated in the submission of various memoranda to the government of the native state demanding more representation for the upper castes in the government jobs (Jeffrey, 1994: 142-46). These efforts at pleading to the government for their communities' rights to get represented in the bureaucracy would show that the upper caste communities were indeed trying to access modern social and economic developments.

Experiences of the Slave Castes: The Emergence of the Subaltern Counter Publics

The above trajectory of the upper castes' transformation is in direct opposition to the experiences of the slave castes, which is the main concern of my paper. However, that can't be done in isolation as the latter were structurally controlled by the upper castes. Although there has been some documentation on the life and conditions of the slave castes thanks to the work of the CMS and LMS missionaries, they were yet to be brought under colonial governmentality. One of the significant moments that represent their arrival on the historical scene unfolds with the 1847 memorandum that twelve missionaries submitted to the ruler of the native state of Travancore pleading him to abolish slavery following the abolition of slavery in British India that was effected in 1843.(Abbs,1847) Although rejected by the native rulers, it is in this historical document that we read the first organized effort at presenting the case of the slaves of Travancore and by extension in other parts of Kerala for ameliorative action to the native ruler. I am not forgetting the fact that right from the first decade of the nineteenth century there were a lot of initiatives to collect information regarding slave castes that would eventually provide a veritable body of information regarding the practice of slavery in various parts of Kerala (Major, 2012: 321-340; Adam, 1840:120-26).

A close reading of the missionary writings would show that abolition of slavery was important for them as that alone would have given them access to the slave castes who were the absolute property of the masters who had the power to kill them or sell them[7]. While they pleaded with the native rulers, they also used their clout with the Madras government and eventually the abolition was effected formally in 1855 (Major, 2012: 321-40; Saradamony, 1980: 86-100). Yet, large majority of the slaves in the villages continued to live in the same condition (Report of Native Church Missionary Association, 1909; Painter, 1898). As noted earlier, the work of the CMS missionaries among the slaves started a few years before the actual abolition of slavery. In fact, what the CMS referred to as Mass Movement conversion began in 1854, a year before the abolition of slavery in the native state of Travancore. It was during this time that the missionaries had founded what they referred to as slave schools and churches, for the enslaved castes. This slave church and school both functioned in the same thatched shed which was in fact a

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[7] Every slave transaction document would be super scribed or written in the body of the contract with the phrase Kill you may Kill Sell you may sell. (Mohan, 2015: 38)

larger hut and architecturally similar to the huts of the slaves.

The Churches would be founded usually on the dykes of the rice fields which would be raised from the marshes or back waters through the labor of the slaves or in the jungles far away from the properties of the landlords (Hunt, 1920: 201-03). In fact, there are ethnographic narratives of slaves setting up their thatched shed for school and chapel by reclaiming land out of the marshes (Mateer, 1883: 41). The significance of the school is that it was the first public space where the slaves could ever aspire to come together. Elsewhere, I have referred to this as a modern space where they began to enjoy certain amount of freedom (Mohan, 2015). It was in the slave school and chapel that they learned the scriptures as well as basic language skills and arithmetic. Significance of the slave school does not end there. It was a space where all slaves could come—men, women and children—and become part of learning and worship. In addition to the religious aspects of it, we also read about the discussions that the slaves were engaged in, which refers to the fact that they were able to develop new ideas about a better life in the course of the discussions and deliberations with the missionaries. Such discussions articulated rational propositions that they deliberated to overcome centuries old oppressions and sufferings. Missionaries who worked along with the slave castes have noted in great astonishment the effects such a public sphere had on the upper castes. Some upper castes wanted to have similar institutions for themselves while some others established schools for the slaves (Jeffrey, 1994: 43-51).

It is important to ascertain the effects of sermons and homilies that they listened to in the Church. The sermons and homilies introduced to them new concepts and categories of thought. It may be noted that the missionaries had composed songs for the congregations to sing. Based on Biblical themes, these songs and hymns had a substantial effect on the slave castes. Some of the songs also had as their themes lives and experiences of the slaves. More importantly, we also come across songs composed by slave caste Christians themselves drawing on their experiences. These are very important, as, such compositions gave them opportunity to communicate their own ideas and perceptions. In other words, instances from the everyday life of slave caste women, men and children were found expressed in their songs. This is important for another reason; the liturgical rendering of the experiences of the slave caste individuals had the potential to invoke them as sacred objects that are otherwise thought of as agents carrying pollution. Historical and contemporary ethnographic information on the slaves shows their taste for singing and music (Mateer, 1883: 317; Hunt, 1920: 198).

However, among the first generation of those who joined the Protestant missions we have come across the examples of people composing songs in the local idioms that were circulated only among the slave castes. In the exclusive slave caste congregations, we come across extremely talented people who could compose songs in modern literary Malayalam.

More importantly, it has also been noted that the slaves were eager to attend the meetings and ready to listen to the missionaries. The slave castes desire for a community was expressed in their coming together for prayers in the

congregations as well as to listen to the missionaries. In other words, they always showed a yearning for communication that was not possible in the traditional caste order where their movement and coming together for anything other than the work in the landlord's field was banned. Therefore, the congregational activities that included singing worked as great events that they really enjoyed and looked forward to (Fenn, 1876). It has been observed in the context of the religiosity of slaves elsewhere that congregational singing was very important for them, and often enough it contributed to the formation of a subaltern counterpublic sphere for them (Vondey, 2012).

In the Tamil context Bernard Bate talks about the translation of the sermons and homilies and the large-scale circulation of such materials that created a Tamil public sphere heavily influenced by Protestant ideas (Bate, 2010: 101-15). He also refers to the significance of the communication in which catechists and even lay preachers played a significant role (Bate, 2010: 106). More importantly he refers to the manner in which classical Tamil genres were used to articulate the ideas of protestant Christianity. In the Malayalam literary public sphere, which was highly skewed, we do not find the use of classical tradition in the circulation of the Protestant Christian religious texts. However, the circulation of religious literature among the slave castes in the mid nineteenth century shows that there was gradual percolation of a chaste Malayalam language among the slaves who began to learn with the missionaries. Anthropologists have referred to similar phenomena as instances of linguistic modernity. It is in this context that I wish to focus on the significance of the translation of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. It is true that the upper caste literati always showed a disdain towards the literate slaves who would have carried along with them portions of scriptures and prayer books (Mateer, 1883: 44). Missionary sources also show examples of upper castes acquiring sometimes the Bible or printed portions thereof. We also get references to the gradual progress that the slave castes were making in literacy and linguistic skills (Hawksworth, 1861). In many cases those who were not very fluent in reading could repeat portions of the scriptures as they listened to others reading the texts. One such instance was the time of prayers at the slave school as well as in their homes. It may be mentioned that the prayers were significant as they introduced to the slave caste Christians new vocabulary and provided new imaginaries. This went on to have particular significance when they began to say prayers extemporé. More importantly, these were occasions that judged the proficiency that the slave caste Christians have achieved both in terms of biblical ideas and language.

We come across narratives of women who could read scriptures and in certain other cases we read about women who have acquired language skills to articulate the ideas drawn on the scriptures (Koshi, 1857). I have already mentioned examples of slave caste men and women who excelled in composing devotional songs. In spite of such qualities there prevailed a social disconnect between the traditional Christians and the slave caste Christians. As a result of it, the former looked down upon the religious practices of the slave caste Christians. Over the years we come across a genre of Christian literature produced exclusively by Dalit Christians. The example of the World Mission Evangelism Church of God, an

exclusive Pentecostal denomination of Dalits is an interesting case in point. Although an exclusive Dalit Pentecostal Church, they were able to publish prayer books and hymns and other religious literature and of late they also publish theological books authored by Dalits (Perumpetty, 1999: 192-204).

However, their circulation is different from the literature published by the dominant Churches in that they cater to the requirements of Dalit Christian community in general and their own Church in particular. Although these texts are based on the Bible, they remain in their particular niche, yet producing symbolic value as the Church could enter the world of printing in an impressive manner. This presence in the public sphere through printing and production of a particular variety of Christian literature carves out certain space for them in the religious sphere unlike several other smaller exclusive Dalit Pentecostal Churches who do not have the institutional prowess to accomplish such tasks. Another important aspect of their congregational practice is the annual convention. The annual convention is held at the headquarters of the Church, which is in a village named Kariyanplavu near Ranni in the Pathanamthitta district of Kerala. Although they are yet to write a systematic history of the convention, it could be argued that such conventions and sermons delivered there created a public sphere, which was subaltern counterpublic. Such exclusive gatherings of Dalit Pentecostals tell a great deal about the anti-caste nature of Dalit Christianity and the manner in which the Bible was used in creating an oppositional space. I wish to argue that one of the contributions of Dalit Christianity especially that of Pentecostal Churches is the creation of an alternate public sphere where religious ideas are discussed, and sermons and homilies were delivered. Following the Christian revival movements of the last decades of the nineteenth century there developed a number of Christian evangelical religious conventions that drew thousands of people to listen to the sermons and celebration of the word of God. Most important and the earliest of them was organized by the reformed Marthomite Church. However, the conventions of Dalit Pentecostal Churches began at a time when still there were restrictions in the use of public space in Kerala. Under such circumstances Kariyanplavu convention made the enclaving of subaltern counterpublics as a possibility. Thousands of white clad believers assemble for the convention usually in the second week of January every year, which began in 1949 (Perumpetty, 1999: 160-63).

The formation of a class of intellectuals in such Churches who are in a position to articulate their own version of Protestant theology is the most significant thing to be noted here. More importantly, we also come across the critique of caste that such religious groups have articulated. In fact, the proliferation of the Pentecostal denominations is a product of the prevalence of caste among Christians in Kerala. In other words, the direct connection with the word of God gives power to the pastors to carry on with their congregational activities, even if they are very ordinary individuals and lacked resources. Therefore, Pentecostal Christianity, offered them powerful language and metaphors to articulate their religious ideas and to offer a critique of caste. It is in this context that I wish to argue that such religious denominations constituted a subaltern counter public.

Sermons and Public articulations

It is appropriate here to mention the wayside sermons and speeches that the missionaries used to conduct regularly, which was part of their itinerary. During the festival times they would go to the Hindu temples and give sermons arguing about the futility of image worship (Koshi, 2007: 54-71). It has been observed that such events were used as pedagogic occasions to teach the people. Surprisingly, on many instances itinerant missionaries escaped without being hurt although there were occasions when they would be faced with physical violence. Arguments between a Christian protagonist and people belonging to other faiths, Hinduism and Islam, was a genre that the nineteenth century didactic texts followed to establish the superior claims that missionary Christianity represented. On such occasions it was the European missionaries who became very successful in their arguments and critique of Hinduism and Islam. The native missionaries especially those mission workers and catechists drawn from within the slave castes were particularly active in their local communities as they would coordinate the prayer meetings in the evenings. However, those prayer meetings would be held in the late evening in the jungles and people would assemble there in the darkness so that the landlord's agents who were in the lookout for the Gospel preachers would not recognize them.

Missionaries of the Anglican missions such as the Church Missionary Society and the London Missionary Society in the southern region of Kerala observed that among the different lower castes, slaves were most willing to listen to them and learn from them. They were ready, according to many missionaries, to understand the Word of God. The 'Word of God' reached them mainly through the prayer meetings and reading sessions that the missionaries used to conduct regularly. Such prayer meetings have been occasions when they experienced, what may be referred to as coming of the Lord to them. Reflecting on the experience of liberation of African Americans, in his seminal book, *Black Reconstruction*, W.E.B. Du Bois, refers to liberation from slavery as "[T]his was the coming of the Lord. This was the fulfillment of prophecy and legend. It was the Golden Dawn, after chains of a thousand years. It was everything miraculous and perfect and promising" (Du Bois, 1935: 122). We may observe a similar coming of the Lord phenomenon in the case of slaves in Kerala.

Public speeches used to be conducted in the markets and sometimes in the cattle market which would be considered as space that is referred to as neutral space of "zero-degree individuals"; individuals who come from all over (Bate, 2010: 106). Such spaces were most suited for the evangelical exploits of many preachers who came from the former slave castes especially in the early twentieth century. In the mid to late Nineteenth century missionary records show that mostly it was the work of the catechists from the slave castes to work in similar congregations. It was through such works that the idea of salvation was brought home with a different flavor; it was not something confined to the texts alone. On the contrary, the idea of salvation began to have a liberating effect on the people in the slave caste congregations. I wish to argue here that the ideas drawn from the scriptures worked as a new form knowledge with which the slave castes were able to make sense of the world. The book of Exodus informed their craving for a life free from slavery.

It has been reported that the occasions of the prayer meetings or small meetings held by the missionaries were the occasions when the people could use magic lanterns. Use of light was a big luxury during those days as most of the slave castes would not have the means to use oil for lighting lamps and therefore the occasions of the prayer were significant as they offered them the much required coming together of the community in the night and often affording them with the help of the missionary the luxury of lighting the lamp. While these occasions of prayer offered the slave castes the much-required time to deliberate on the future plans of the congregations, they also worked as moments of resistance against oppression.

In the course of our fieldwork on 26 February 2013 we listened to a narrative in one of the villages where Salvation Army was actively working among Dalits. This incident took place in a village, named Thurithikkara in 1937, in the Quilon district of Kerala. Dalits of the Salvation Army were denied water from the nearby well owned by upper caste Nairs. The well owned by the Church had already dried up. It was in such a context that one Dalit family of Puthenvila Paulose faced a serious problem of water scarcity on the occasion of the marriage of his daughter. The local upper castes did not allow the Dalits to cross over their property and fetch water from another well that was situated in a paddy field. Completely distressed and exhausted, the people knelt down near the empty well and prayed there for two and a half hours. It has been observed that seven members of the Salvation Army Church led the prayer.

To their great shock and astonishment, they heard a loud noise from the depths of the well. When looked inside they found, to their disbelief, water rising in the well. The next day's feast went on well. Today people recall this particular incident as a very important event that marked the God's blessings upon them and God answering their heart felt prayer. When our team of researchers visited that village, they gave us the copies of notice and pamphlets announcing the anniversary celebration of that event and the special prayer commemorating it. Today people go there and collect water from the 'miracle well', as they call it, and take the 'sacred' water in small bottles and pour it into their own wells lest they dry up. The significant aspect of this narrative is the instance of deploying prayer as a powerful instrument in resisting the embargo of the landed gentry. The faith in the Lord provided them agency, even if it was nascent, in this instance, to withstand the landlord oppression, and overcome obstacles (Mohan,2013).

Such incidents tell us a great deal about mentality of popular religion in which prayer is significant. Therefore, the intention here is not to juxtapose myth and reality. On the contrary, the question is to analyze how people understood such narratives.

Shahid Amin, the renowned subaltern historian, talks about springs sprouting in the dry wells due to the miraculous powers of the name of the Mahatma (Amin,1999:43). "Amin interpreted it as the working of the particular construction of the image of Gandhi suffused with the elements drawn from the popular religion of the peasant masses. In our case, it seems that those Dalits who joined the

missionary churches expected millennial transformation and resolution of crises in individual and social life" (Mohan, 2013).

While the example given above is related to prayer and religious practices, we may note that the prayer practice created a public sphere where crisis generated by water scarcity was discussed and resolution of the crisis was proposed. Similarly, the well was turned into the center of a public space. Many narratives and discourses were spawned on the basis of the events narrated here.

Everyday life, Subaltern Counterpublics and the new Notion of Community

Studies on Christian missions have shown globally how the Biblical narratives provided powerful metaphors around which reconstitution of societies could take place (Keane,2007). The linear narrative of salvation was very powerful in bringing about changes in the everyday life and that was not limited to the spiritual dimension of life. This is largely because of the fact that protestant teaching had its central idea of the believer taking responsibility for his/her faith, which is accomplished through the reading of the scriptures. Therefore, we come across the slow percolation of the 'Word of God' and along with that the spread of literacy. For example, we have come across ethnographic context of agricultural laborers from slave castes engaging in prayers while still working in the field. This had the potential to create something similar to a public sphere where exchange of ideas could take place. It may be noted that in the CMS mission fields in the Travancore region of Kerala, everyday life of the slave castes was being transformed. Two things stand out here as significant. First and foremost is the gradual spread of literacy and secondly the possible reorganization of everyday life of the slave castes centering on the new practices of learning at the slave schools that functioned as chapels in the evening. Such coming together for learning and evening readings in the chapel created a new notion of ritual community that in fact had far reaching consequences. One of which was that this ritual community created a nascent public for the slave castes. It was in the course of such meetings that the people could deliberate on various aspects related to their social life, which was very precarious. However, it does not mean that the slave caste laborers could stay away from their everyday work in the landlords' field. These examples show that the people began to have a different perception of themselves and others that was created through the missionary intervention and teaching. Some missionaries have noted that even the upper caste Hindus tried to emulate the public gatherings that the former used to organize for their congregations. In the early twentieth century it was noted that those Dalits who did not join the CMS or other missionary Churches used to have their meetings and prayers on Sundays (Stephens, 1916). These examples show the gradual evolution of the idea of publics as learned from the practice of the Protestant missions.

However, in the case of the slave castes as they came under the missionary instruction from the early 1850's, in many places the missionaries were successful in bringing together the numerically dominant slave castes such as the Pulayas

and the Parayas. It would have been almost impossible before, as they would have observed distance pollution among themselves. It was in this context that the British Missionary John Hawksworth famously interviewed in the early 1850's two Travancore slaves. In the course of the interview the missionary asked one of the slaves, Christened Abel, whether he would mind walking along with a Paraya Christian to which the slave answered that he would not mind if the Paraya in question is a Christian. We may note here the possibilities of a new community of believers emerging transcending caste differences, however fragile it had been, which was facilitated by the new religious teachings. Another significant aspect is to follow the sermons and homilies in order to ascertain their contents and think through the possible ideas thus conveyed. What is preventing us from such an effort is the lack of full-fledged information about the homilies except the broad indications towards the ideas conveyed on such occasions to the community of worshippers. The missionaries, who worked among the most oppressed in the Kerala society, would have used in their sermons the ideas of liberation from oppressive caste slavery, as a point of departure (Mammen, 1857). It has been observed in the context of societies with such histories of slavery and oppression that the missionaries of the CMS as well as other organizations used to give narratives of a different temporality of salvation, which was rooted in the specific histories of such societies. Similarly, the native catechists and missionaries and mission agents would often try to bring in native histories in such a manner that that could be sutured into the Christian narratives of redemption and salvation. The example quoted is that of the liberated slaves of Sierra Leone who would recollect their liberation as instances of the liberation that God bestowed up on them (Peel, 2003: 24). However, in the Travancore case we are yet to come across examples of the narratives of sermons preached by slave caste catechists or mission workers. In other words, unlike the CMS mission centers in the African context where different segments of the native society would become missionaries, who would write their journals, in Kerala the journals were authored by the missionaries from the dominant caste Syrian Christian community. Native missionaries and Church workers under various capacities were also from the Syrian Christian community. Therefore, we listen to the voices of the slave caste Christians represented in the writings of native dominant caste missionaries or European missionaries who performed such a work as cultural translators and producers of knowledge.

Their translation in fact worked both ways; they translated Protestant Christianity to the slaves and subsequently translated the cultural world of the slave castes for a larger European audience. This cultural translation took various forms as from the 1840's onwards there was a lot of information circulating on caste slavery in various journals and magazines published by Anti-Slavery Society and similar organizations from the UK. In addition to this, there were several books and pamphlets including the children's storybooks featuring the stories of slave castes in Kerala. Such storybooks in fact functioned as a substantial medium of cultural translation. In such stories down to the twentieth century the central theme had been the everyday life of the slave caste men, women and children and the transformation that the missionaries had brought about. These books were narratives of redemption, encouraging young children in the metropolis to support

the labor of the missionaries in the colonies by offering liberal donations, in this instance to the missionaries working among the slave castes in Travancore.

The reference to the introduction of a new notion of community, from the perspective of the missionaries would prompt us to ask what actually distinguished their idea of community. In order to answer this question, I wish to follow AF Painter, one of the missionaries who worked in Travancore for a long time who was very much committed to the cause of the slave castes. He had worked in Travancore from the late 1860's through the first decades of the twentieth century witnessing profound changes taking place in the lives of the slave castes. It is appropriate to call him as the Apostle of the Pulayas in the CMS mission as he was referred to in the missionary writings of the period. Closely following his unpublished reports as well as other published writings I wish to argue that he had acquired tremendous insights into the world of the slave castes (Painter, 1908). While he never doubted the religious commitment of the slave castes that were baptized, he was fully aware of the oppressions and tribulations they had to face while professing their new faith. He worked among the Mala Araya Christians after the famous British missionary, Henry Baker Jr. and also in the mission stations in Kangazha, and Pambady among others in Kottayam, Kerala. Most of his mission stations were slave caste congregations and therefore he worked in those congregations attending to the spiritual and material requirements of the people. He was convinced of the fact that the slave Christians were steadfast in their faith and to buttress his conviction he refers to the daring history of Puthuparambil Patrose, a former slave, who had to endure persecution on account of his faith as well as the community of slave Christians in Kagnazha, which was oppressed by the upper caste landlords. Patrose was imprisoned following a false complaint filed against him by the upper caste landlords and Painter pleaded to the Magistrate in Alappuzha and got him released. In fact, it was through his writings that the world got to know about the steadfastness of the faith a man like Patrose as well as the leadership qualities he evinced in the community. Painter intervened on several occasions on behalf of the oppressed slave castes. In fact, he had petitioned to the Travancore government to open up public roads for slave castes. In the early 1890's he wrote that the situation of the slave castes in Travancore would change only if they themselves organize and rise up against their oppressors. On many occasions in the diocesan committees of the Travancore and Cochin he strongly pleaded for the cause of slave castes and even proposed that it was essential to give education to the slave castes rather than being satisfied with the tokenism that was the dominant attitude towards the education of the slave castes. There is strong circumstantial evidence to suggest that he pleaded for admitting slave caste children in the English school run by the CMS (Painter, 1908). Needless to say, such suggestions were not met with the required support except one lone member in the diocesan committee favoring it. Providing a powerful example of English as a contested resource, this case also proves the fact that dominant caste within the CMS was zealous in guarding the fortress of privileges that they had come to acquire through the missionaries. Painter also intervened in the case of the slaves who were not allowed to enter the Kottayam market to sell their products including the grass fodder that they could bring to the market. He used his acquaintance with Superintendent of Police

at Kottayam to secure a better place for the slave castes to sell their small products in the market. These examples prove the fact that missionaries like Painter were committed to the possible liberation of slave castes that Gospel truth espoused. Following the writings of Painter, one would argue that he could actually represent the emotional world of the slave castes in the emergent public sphere. There is a progression in Painter's case from intervening in the everyday life of the oppressed slaves by rescuing the bleeding Pulaya man who was stabbed by a Nair at Lalam at Palai nearly twenty-five miles away from the CMS mission station at Kottayam, to presenting their case before the government by invoking the language of rights as far as access to public roads and markets are concerned (Mamen, 1857). We come across the example of missionaries becoming the initiators of a modern form of politics based on rights in which the slave castes become crucial players in the decades to come. In one of his letters Painter observed that Pulayas in their turn would become missionaries of Christ. This transformation of Pulayas as missionaries envisioned by Painter had several interesting consequences in the public sphere[8]. Mrs. Collins' eponymous novel, the *Slayer Slain*, represented the Pulaya Protagonist with all its dramatic effect in the public sphere.

Creating Mutually Shared Emotional World and the Subaltern Counterpublics

The missionaries constructed and circulated the narratives of the world of the slaves, and in the process, they also had framed the contours of such a discourse. Such narrations were meant for both the metropolitan and native public sphere. There is also the idea of moral pedagogy for a fundamental transformation of the oppressor and oppressed involved in this. I wish to show this by tracking the circulation of certain texts that are famously known as missionary texts, yet, of a different genre. One interesting example is the famous novel by Ms. Collins, the *Slayer Slain*, which graphically describes the plight of the Pulaya slave laborers owned by a Syrian Christian landlord named Koshi Curien who was a onetime adherent of the CMS but since backtracked to his traditional ways (Traditional Church). He is a wealthy landlord, who owns a number of Pulaya slaves who have been baptized of late. As it happened in the case of several thousands of such baptized slaves, the slaves of Koshi Curien also refused to work on Sundays as they came to know of it as the day of the Lord, God. They tried to convince the enraged landlord that it was a day set apart for the worship of the Lord. Moreover, the landlord was furious with those slaves who became Christians the other day and who dared to teach him, a traditional Syrian Christian, the Gospel. The slaves assured the landlord that his standing crops would be reaped on the next day and there won't be any loss at all as they all would mobilize their energy and might to

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[8] It had both religious and secular implications. It meant on the one hand the Pulayas carrying forward the transforming power of the missionary work and on the other envisioning social movements of the oppressed Pulayas against their oppressors. Mohan, P. Sanal (2013) Prayer as Resistance.
https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjYgb7StYPlAhVDvI8KHVXXBE4QFjACegQIAxAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fforums.ssrc.org%2Fndsp%2F&usg=AOvVaw04SVsJvF06gvCKtBFnQuND, accessed on October 3,2019

the full to finish the harvest and that they be allowed to worship the Lord on Sundays. This opinion of the Pulaya protagonist and his confidence in expressing it further enraged the landlord particularly when the former referred to the prayers, which have become significant for them. They were of the opinion that they needed to be away from work for the congregational prayer.

As soon as the old slave Pouluse uttered these statements, an infuriated landlord struck him with the special stick, that symbolized his authority over the slaves, inflicting a deep cut on the latter's forehead that made him bleed profusely. The second blow, as it descended, Pouluse's wife moved in between her bleeding husband and the landlord with her precious first-born infant grandson on her hip; the terribly brutal blow fell on the infant, instantly turning him a corpse. The narrative of the novel is emotionally charged that makes the life of the slaves appear from the leaf of an ethnographic text. What is significant for our purpose here is the different forms in which the novel was circulated. Serialized in the official journal of the CMS diocese, Kottayam, the novel remained as first of its kind to be written in Kerala although in English. However, the novel had a very interesting reincarnation subsequently as a Service of Songs performed in the CMS congregations in the UK, which were supporting the efforts of the missionaries in Travancore. The narrative of the novel is accompanied by appropriate biblical verses/texts rendered as songs with musical notations on the obverse by the famous Organist of St. James, Holloway, Livesey Carrot and compiled by JHB published most probably in the late 1890's by the Church Missionary House, London. It is quite likely that the Service of Songs format of the *Slayer Slain* received much attention in the CMS circles in the UK. What is far more significant for us today is the manner in which the emotions of the metropolitan supporters of the missionary labor were inflected by the emotional world of the missionized slave castes of Travancore. In fact the novel is a transformative one in which eventually the oppressor landlord also undergoes his conversion hearing the sermon of Pouluse who had disappeared from the village after saving Koshi Curien's daughter Mariam who was almost swept away by the swirling waters while crossing the river on her way back home. The novelist narrates the transformation of the oppressor landlord by following his efforts at tracing the missing Pouluse who saved his beloved daughter from the jaws of death. He finally meets Pouluse with the help of the Native Pastor in one of the hilly villages where the latter labored among the slave castes. The confessional repentance of the landlord Koshi Curien on meeting Pouluse was the *Slayer Slain* moment in which the final triumph of the slave Christian Pouluse over the remorse filled landlord is emotionally portrayed. Appropriate songs, themes of which were drawn on the Bible, accompany these emotional narratives of the theme of the novel. I would argue that the Pulaya protagonist undergoes a transformation that is unparalleled transforming the suffering Pulaya into a liminal world of divinity. This liminality was produced by the intense sufferings, personal and social that make them worthy of receiving providential mercy. But at the moment of his triumph, Pouluse pardons the oppressor to proclaim the essence of humanity and oneness in the Lord. While the text, the *Slayer Slain*, could be amenable to a variety of interpretations like any other literary text, the point of departure for the present purpose is the particular way in which the emotions of the enslaved were

articulated and made the touchstone of a possible framing of emotions in the metropolis. In other words, the emotional world of the oppressed Pulayas and the metropolitan Christians began to occupy similar social time framing each other. Many of the events alluded to in the novel finds resonance in the narrative of actual events that we read in the reports of many missionaries based in Travancore region of Kerala that are available in the missionary archive. I wish to mention in particular the narratives of British missionaries such as A. F Painter, John Hawksworth and Archdeacon Caley among others. The near ethnographic writings of native missionaries such as George Matthan, Koshi Koshi help us understand the construction of the emotional world of the slave castes in which love, longing, affect, desire, among others get inflected through the Protestant Christian discourses.

In the introduction to the special edition of Service of Songs of the *Slayer Slain* the compiler talks about the literalness of the narrative of the text that was the order of the day in Travancore until a few decades of the writing of the novel. However, according to him, the sufferings of the slaves, especially physical torture and killings, have been mitigated to a great extent, yet, there still remained many forms of oppressions at the time when the Service of Songs were composed in the late 1890's. In spite of the abatement in the degree of oppressions and sufferings, they continue to remain as significant in missionary narratives and get rearticulated in a highly emotionally charged manner in the form of Service Songs.

Alongside this example of Service of Songs, I wish to consider certain texts that were circulated in the Sunday Schools in the UK in which a great variety of missionary stories were translated. What we may consider here more importantly is the manner in which certain forms of cultural translation took place in the metropolitan world. Obviously, this form of cultural translation made use of a variety of texts from different cultural contexts in the colonies where the global missionary organizations were active. It is in this context that I wish to consider here an interesting text that embodied cultural translation in a significant manner among the children in the Anglican Churches of CMS supporters in the UK. It is an example of the significance attached to the strange experiences of the missionaries in the far-off corners of the world, to elicit support of the young students of the metropolitan Sunday schools. Published in 1852 in the series named, missionary tracts, numbered 5, tilted as 'The Travancore Mission', with a cover picture featuring a sketch of the British missionary Henry Baker Jr. in all probability sitting on a chair in his tree house on top of a big tree, the pamphlet served as a an important text to introduce to the young children the varied experience of the missionaries without losing the pedagogical aspects of the knowledge that the missionaries labored hard to create on the missionized societies. It is written in the format of an actual classroom setting where one Rev. Joseph Goodwin taught the young village Sunday School children the experiences of the missionaries such as Joseph Peet in Mavelikkara in the first half of the 19th century. From the narrative it becomes clear that it was a continuation of the classroom discussion of the previous Sunday, which was on the work of the CMS in the Tinneveli, in the Tamil country in the first half of the 19th century. The pedagogic aspect of the whole exercise is brought in full force as the missionary

work in South India is provided with the essential inputs on geographical and social aspects of the region and society the text deals with. Eventually, the text moves onto the story of the missionary who spends his night in the tree house as he was risking his own life due to the wild animals at large in that area inhabited by the hill tribes, 'Hill Araan'. Sign posting the works of the CMS in the major mission stations in the mid nineteenth century from winning 'converts' to their labor in printing books including the translation of the scriptures and the great variety of intellectual works of missionaries in writing Malayalam dictionaries and grammar, this narrative introduces to the young students the real challenge of the missionary work. Needless to say, that there is a special mention of the labor of the missionary Benjamin Baily. What is more striking here is the interspersion of emotional narrative with the rational arguments that show the transforming work of the missionaries in the 'heathen land.' Narrating the story of CMS mission in Travancore until the early years of the 1850's the Rev. Goodwin makes emotional appeal to the young children by referring to the CMS missionary labor in Travancore quoting from the Bible one of the most favorite quotations of the missionaries. According to him they must rather regard it as "the day of small things" "not to be despised, and ought thankfully to reflect, that if one soweth, and another repeath, yet both shall one day rejoice together" (Peel,1995).

Conclusion

In this paper I tried to show with a limited number of examples how the missionaries were instrumental in creating knowledge on slave caste/Dalit communities in Kerala there by representing them in the public sphere. Following the debates in the area of the theory of public sphere it is appropriate to refer to the public sphere created by the missionaries and the slave castes, and later as Dalits as a case of subaltern counterpublics as it was instrumental in creating, ideas, worldviews and programs for a future society. They expected alongside these ideas, equality and justice to prevail that would eventually liberate the oppressed caste slaves from centuries of sufferings. Although I have taken examples from Kerala, there are similar experiences that we come across in various parts of India as well as other parts of the world where the missionaries were very active. Expressed in religious idioms, they contain several significant questions not just for social historians or social anthropologists. Those observations are significant in understanding the transformations that former slave castes—Dalits—have undergone in the colonial and postcolonial times. The most significant question had been that of the agency of the people that was made possible through their learning of the scriptures, which could not be understood in isolation. It could be expressed as one of the major features that decided the nature of the subaltern counterpublics thus created.

In the mutually constituted emotional world of the missionaries and the slave castes the public and private spheres became extremely complicated. One significant argument that is made here closely following the missionary narratives contained in various reports and fiction that have bearing on the emergence of the counterpublics is that social programs and religious practices together created

the public sphere of the slave caste subalterns in Kerala. The powerful articulation of freedom and agency found in the case of historical figures like Puthuparampil Patrose who interacted closely with missionaries like Archdeacon Caley and A F Painter provide us with formidable examples of the desire for freedom and community. The same spirit we encounter in the Pulaya Protagonist Pouluse in the novel the *Slayer Slain*. In fact, Pouluse is an iconic figure who really could have been a flesh and blood person living in any of the villages around Kottayam serving his Syrian Christian master. A close reading of the historical sources of the 19th century particularly narrating the experiences of the slave castes actually shows the repeatability of the life of Pouluse. However, they are not just confined to the marshy rice fields, they come to the stage to read the scriptures and interpret them. It is in these possible interpretations that I wish to identify the promises of subaltern counterpublics historically in Kerala.

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From Hindu-Christian Contexts to Muslim-Christian Solidarities:
Transreligious Activism and the Secular Servants of God (Khudai Khidmatgar)

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> *Religion is for make-up, . . . for beautification.*
>
> *If I believe in non-violence, I am not influenced by Gandhi, I am influenced by Islam. Islam said, "If you are protecting a single human being, you are protecting the whole humanity."*
>
> *If Karl Marx were alive, he would come here to Sab ka Ghar.*
> *Faisal Khan*
>
> *In the end times, Jesus will say to Christians, You didn't stand with those who were crying, so you didn't stand for me.*
> *Kripal Singh Mandloi*
>
> *Humanity is more important than any other concept. I have read many books but the practice is what I see in Khudai Khidmatgar. I am going to work for this community.*
>
> *There is a lot of discrimination in Indian Christianity. Please concentrate on that in your article.*
> *Dr. M. Ignatius*

Abstract

Studies of Indian Christianity have historically focused on relationships with Hinduism. While such a focus is understandable given the importance of Hindu traditions in South Asia and the scheduled caste backgrounds of the majority of Indian Christian converts, it also risks reinforcing several problematic assumptions encoded in the very categories "Indian," "Hindu" and "Christian." In contrast, this paper focuses on emergent forms of solidarity between Indian Christians and Muslims—and others—through interviews with members and close affiliates of Khudai Khidmatgar, an organization founded by the activist Faisal Khan in 2011. I argue that the presence and perspectives of Indian Christians in the group reveal that the group's methods, ethical commitments, and motivations are strikingly

similar to what Nathaniel Roberts has characterized as the "foreignness of belonging", and point ultimately to a transreligious politics of care.

Key words: Indian Christians, Muslims, secularism, solidarity, Dalits

Studies of Indian Christianity have historically focused on relationships with Hinduism. While such a focus is understandable given the importance of Hindu traditions in South Asia and the scheduled caste backgrounds of the majority of Indian Christian converts, it also risks reinforcing several problematic assumptions encoded in the very categories "Indian," "Hindu" and "Christian." To take just one example, Indian Christian advocates of taking Dalit culture, religion, and oppression more seriously have recently spoken of the "Sanskritic captivity" of the Indian Christian church (Kim, 2004) being reinforced by assuming a brahminical framework for Indian and/or Hindu religion. This critique overlaps in important ways with postcolonial religious studies (King, 1999) and the call for self-reflexivity among scholars concerning basic analytical categories, from Christianity itself (Premawardhana, 2011) to religion and gender and their interrelations (Mohanty, 1984). More constructively and specifically, the turn to Dalit religious and musical traditions (Clarke, 1998; Sherinian, 2014) has served as an important resource for rethinking and producing new liberation-oriented Indian Christian theologies, narrative, ritual, art and everyday practice. Yet even this turn arguably grants Hinduism an outsized presence, even as it is critiqued, and overlooks other possibilities and South Asian religious realities. For example, what can we see differently when Indian Christianity is re-contextualized by prioritizing Indian Christian relationships to Indian Muslim communities, relationships fundamentally marked by the deep, specifically Christian and Muslim dimensions of Dalit history, identity and struggle? Put simply, while the rejection of Hindu caste might seem to make caste Hinduism especially relevant to studies of Dalit Christianity, even here Muslims, the history of conversion, and complex, shifting religious identities are just as central (Adcock, 2012).[1]

In order to begin addressing this question, this paper explores Indian Christian participation in the predominantly Indian Muslim organization Khudai Khidmatgar (Servants of God), founded by the activist Faisal Khan in 2011 and growing steadily since. The organization is a revival of its namesake, Abdul Ghaffar Khan's Islamic

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[1] The realities of Dalit Hinduism, for example, in urban centers, offer other important examples that can only be noted here: "Only in this relatively caste-free environment has Hinduism become a religion these Dalits can truly call their own. Where Hinduism in the village remains tied to caste in ways that exclude Dalits from full participation, in the city it has become for the first time a matter of personal choice" (Roberts, 2016). Similarly, Roberts points out in *To Be Cared For*, Hinduism or God are not to blame for caste, according to Christian Dalits in the slum, but people.

nonviolent resistance army fighting British rule in what is today Pakistan (Banerjee, 2001; Arbab, 2017). These famously "violent" Pashtuns from the Northwest Frontier Province became the single-most organized and widespread anti-British force in their region and an important ally of Gandhi's Congress. Ghaffar Khan himself became known as the "frontier Gandhi" (*sarhadi Gandhi*), and much like Gandhi in post-Partition India, would prove a thorn in the side of his own government of Pakistan. Today's Delhi-based redux, which looks to both Ghaffar Khan and Gandhi for inspiration, has quickly grown into an all-India presence with over 100,000 members. Described by some as "revolutionary", Faisal Khan's movement, if still Islamic in many ways, is more pluralistic, drawing together a range of young Muslims, Christians, Hindus, atheists and others to work together to actively intervene in a wide range social problems and challenges. Their projects often center on lower class and lower caste contexts, such as the unionization of rag pickers, but also implicitly or explicitly address the religious extremism produced by political and social forces that often directly affect these groups of marginalized people, specifically Muslims, Dalits, and Indian Christians. An example of this latter work is the group's recent interventions in the current and brutal political violence swirling around issues of beef production, sale, consumption, and Hindu religious "sentiment", addressed below.

This paper is based on interviews with Christian members and close affiliates of Khudai Khidmatgar, as well as with its founder Faisal Khan and a variety of Muslim and Hindu members. I argue that the presence and perspectives of Indian Christians in the group reveal that the group's methods, ethical commitments, and motivations are strikingly similar to what Nathaniel Roberts has characterized as the "foreignness of belonging." In his study of Pentecostal converts in a Chennai slum, *To Be Cared For* (2016), Roberts describes this expansive sense of being "merely human" grounding slum dwellers' sense of shared, *almost*-universal, group identity as opposed to the inhumanity of those who practice caste (*jati*) exclusion:

> Outcastes in their own land, they imagined a special connection between themselves and all who were, in India, labelled foreign--Africans, East Asians, white Europeans. For foreigners too were imagined as being merely human and, like their own idealized selves, freely and spontaneously caring for others. The *foreignness of belonging* in the book's subtitle refers to the dual nature of their predicament. Belonging was itself foreign to these slum dweller's experience in the land of their birth. But they also perceived a world in which they did truly belong, and which awaited them in the form of a larger humanity that was "foreign" in the sense of existing beyond national borders (Roberts, 2016: 6).

As we will see, Indian Christian and their fellow Khidmatgars imagine themselves with a special connection, in part as a result of dominant Hindu/tva discourse that marks both Islam and Christianity as "foreign." But they do not only *imagine* these

communalities or see a world of belonging as extra-national or even eschatological, but actively work towards creating and living in/to that world in concrete, embodied and localized ways. Thus, I suggest, Indian Christians and their fellow Khidmatgars offer an example of a self-consciously religious, secular, and pluralistic social movement, marked by distinctive characteristics, potentials, and experiments, that flesh out, as it were, the practice of a religious politics of, to use a term used by one member, "the crying."

Indian Christian presence in and perspectives on Khudai Khidmatgar help to highlight and analyze 1) specific links between distinct "foreign" religious communities in trans-religious terms (*dharma*), centered on attention to the pain of others; 2) a politics of community, rooted in intervention, experimental forms of community, shared forms of/common everyday life, which not only allow, but welcome religious ritual; 3) shared counter-histories of belonging and Muslim-Christian prophetic models, understood in terms of critique and nonviolence. In addition to the content, style, and context of the interviews offering these insights, ethnography is important here as method, especially in terms of the emergent anthropology of Christianity (Bialecki et al., 2008). The voices of Indian Christians highlighted here are not only important given the contemporary and emergent character of the Khudai Khidmatgar, but also, more importantly and specifically, remind us that the history of missionary writing and vernacular translation *about* Indian Christians have too-often coopted Indian Christian voices and undercut indigenous agency (Dandekar, 2018).

Foreigners and "the Crying"

Kripal Singh Mandloi is a thirty-five-year-old, Protestant Indian Christian from the state of Madhya Pradesh, a member and leader of the Khudai Khidmatgar since 2011. Mandloi is, in addition, a member of the Church of North India and the son of an Indian Christian family tracing its Christian conversion story back to the early days of the Scottish Mission. His grandfather was the first to convert, an elder in his church, while his mother directs a Christian orphanage, and several relatives are involved in Christian institutions teaching theology or pastoral training. I also interviewed two other Christians, the Roman Catholic social worker Dr. M. Ignatius from Tamil Nadu, South India and the longtime Gandhian American David Albert.

Although Mandloi family's particular Christian history is clearly connected with Protestant European missionaries and the British period, he narrates the "background" of Indian Christianity itself from a very different starting point. He chooses to focus on a much more distant origin, hundreds of years before the colonial period:

> Christianity started in India when St. Thomas visited South India almost two thousand years ago, when all the disciples went to different places of the world. . . He stayed there, there is his tomb also, like a basilica, is also there in Chennai. So since then, though, Christianity got started here, however, there is the perception that Christianity came in India with the Britishers, but that's not true. . . That's one of the major points that people aren't aware about. The Catholic church, we have churches like four hundred, five hundred years back. So many denominations that are here for almost a few centuries now.[2]

Though my question did not mention the word "foreign" but instead asked about the "background of Indian Christianity," Mandloi spontaneously frames his response as to the charge of foreignness: "the perception that Christianity came in India with the Britishers." By reframing Christian origins with St. Thomas, his telling not only evokes the primordial but also a global horizon, for Thomas was mirroring the very birth of the global Gospel mission when "all the disciples went to different places in the world." These expansive geographical and temporal frames are, in turn, supplemented by Mandloi's sense of Christian denominational diversity, not only as a Protestant connecting with the origins of the Keralan Syrian Orthodox Church and Roman Catholic Churches, but also in terms of wider varieties: he notes Methodists, Seventh Day Adventists, Pentecostals, the Scottish Mission, among others.

For Indian Christians associated with Khudai Khidmatgar, accusations of "foreignness", in fact, specifically mark two religions: Christianity and Islam. Thus, Mandloi's description of the background of Indian Christianity suggests the ways in which such accusations have become so familiar or commonplace as to be internalized, implied in any question about Christianity in India without prompting. This is not surprising not only given current political discourse, but also because of longstanding notions going back all the way to V. D. Savarkar's account of Hindutva (Hindu-ness) as the center of Indian culture, which defined India as a "sacred land" or land of the merit (*punyabhumi*) and a land of the fathers "*pitrabhumi*". While the text of *Hindutva* has become associated with what is now frequently termed the "religious nationalism" of the RSS and BJP (van der Veer, 2001), for Savarkar the unity of the nation was not so much based on religion (i.e., Hinduism, Vedic sacrifice, the Gita or the gods) as such, but on Hindu-ness in terms of a shared language, ethnicity, and connection to the land, somewhat circularly, the homeland of those who are Hindu, just as Mecca and Medina rooted Muslims in a specific— and separate—part of the world. The idea of Christianity and Islam as foreign religions par excellence is also not limited to older or more recent versions of Hindutva, but is in fact also enshrined in the Indian Constitution and, as a result, reservation policies for scheduled castes. Dalits who convert to Christianity or Islam, or whose ancestors had done so, are not entitled to benefits reserved for "Hindu"

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[2] Kripal Singh Mandloi, Skype Interview, New Delhi, May 11, 2019.

scheduled castes.[3] Ironically, it was an Indian Christian who first used the notion of Hindutva—long before Savarkar—to argue for the Indianness of Christian converts themselves: for the Catholic convert Brahmabandab Upadhyaya, the term Hindutva named a cultural Hinduness—more or less Vedantin—that was distinct from religion *so that* it could be fully embraced by an Indian of any religious belief system, such as, in his own case, someone following orthodox Thomistic Catholic teaching (Lipner, 1999).

Yet, it is, as Mandloi says, not "as a Christian" that he began to participate in Khudai Khidmatgar, but instead because he was looking for a group he would work in "irrespective of religion." For example, he says, "If I work on farmer rights, that's farmer rights" no matter what the religion of the farmers. Moving beyond a singular religious community focus was, for him, also connected with other categories of difference such as caste, gender, and language. With a tribal background himself, he is likely to be aware of the way mainstream society viewed or marginalized groups such as tribes, who were, in turn, he says, quite happy to be isolated and independent. Even more striking, what he termed his own "social work" in the specifically Christian institutions connected with various family members, left him wanting something more. Joining Faisal Khan's group marked a shift from "social work" towards "social activism," a distinction he elaborated on:

> [P]eople think that when you work for society, or social work, it is more of donating something, on your birthdays or anniversaries and that's done. In my case, I was teaching in a slum with my mother, that's what it is. Still I was a little more concerned about their rights and since childhood, I was reading more of human rights and activists, the stories of activists who were involved with peoples' movements….[that did] activist work wherein you work to strengthen people, you work for their rights, to strength society, for a better society. . . Or you work against evil that is happening, political or maybe communal, whatever it is. You work against those evils for a better tomorrow.

Here even teaching in a slum context is aligned with a "donation" model of social engagement, somehow limited and possibly superficial. For Mandloi, this contrasts with a more encompassing history of activists and "peoples' movements" and a discourse of rights, which are crucial to the work of "strengthen[ing] people" and the wider category of social change itself. As he describes it, strengthening implies an awareness of some weakness, a state Mandloi describes in relationship to the "evil that is happening." Such political or communal evils are not abstract but, as he says elsewhere, result in the "crying"—a term he used several times—of the people, that is their suffering. The Christian churches, however, have, in his view, moved

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[3]https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/SC-status-for-Dalit-Muslims-Dalit-Christians-favoured/article15197793.ece , accessed May 19, 2019.

away from the community-mindedness and awareness of social needs they once showed a generation or two ago. Regrettably, the bygone Christian leaders of social work are now replaced by pastors and priests embroiled in corruption and numerous criminal cases.

These elements of Mandloi's Christian perspective on Khudai Khidmatgar's activism echo Faisal Khan's message. Interestingly, the very same concepts that undergird the "secular" social activist organization that attracted Mandloi beyond a parochial Christian, "social work" context, are simultaneously core to Khan's understanding of religion itself: for him, religion, like the Khidmatgar, is secular in that, in order to be genuine, it must be concerned with solidarity with all people, regardless of their religious or other differences. He describes this type of secular attitude in terms of religion's orientation towards "humanity" (*insaniyat*). What makes it religious, however, is not this concern's association with this or that particular religious community, but the way in which it manifests as "mercy" (*rahm*). That is, religion, as he presents it, is not simply oriented to humanity in the abstract, but to human beings in their suffering. Like Mandloi, Faisal Khan situates his current commitments and religious views in terms of his family upbringing:

> My mother's side of the family was very religious but my father's side was not. They were socialistic, i.e. socially strict. I learned about Islam from an analytical point of view in a critical atmosphere. I don't think learning about Islam in an [only] pro-Islam environment is very valuable. My grandfather was very critical of Islam because he was an atheist and he didn't believe in religion. He was a humanitarian and spiritualist. He believed in humanity. Therefore, I grew up believing religion is for humanity. . . . Growing up in a household with this perspective on religion helped me grow, which was Gandhi and Frontier Gandhi's [Badshah Khan's] perspective as well. Tulsi Das said (singing) "*dharm na dusra satya samana*" . . . The meaning is that religion is removing people's pains from others. If you are relieving somebody's pain, you are working for humanity. . . [T]his is from Hadith e Sahih. The prophet said, "If a person doesn't have mercy, he doesn't have faith (*iman*)." Faith and mercy are based on each other. If there is faith, there will be mercy and vice versa. If a cup has tea, the tea will pour out. If it has water, water will pour out. If it has oil, oil will pour out. If we have mercy, mercy will pour out of our hearts. This is the religion we are trying to spread through Khudai Khidmatgar.

Faisal Khan's citation of the Hadith and of the Prophet Muhammad gives a clearly religious, Islamic grounding to his religiously plural social movement, emphasizing a central Islamic ethic of caring and compassion (Sells, 1999). He makes a specific interreligious connection through the idea of human unhappiness or suffering (*dukh*) and a reciprocal mercy or compassion (*rahm, dayal*). It is important to note that he makes clear that he is not simply expressing his personal motivation for doing this

work, but describing the mission of the organization itself: Khudai Khidmatgar is on a mission to spread "this religion." But, what religion, exactly? Coming as they do alongside his citation of Gandhi and Tulsidas as sources for his own understanding of religion, these comments raise further questions. What is the role of Muslim, Hindu, Christian, and other religious scriptures in a movement that is in many ways self-consciously framed to work "irrespective of religion"? While addressed in more depth below, such questions are most relevant here in terms of discourse around Christianity and Islam being somehow unIndian, on the one hand, or, on the other hand, for some, too Indian to be Islamic. In this context, ironically, again, such suspicions are leveled at Faisal Khan for not being, as it were, *foreign enough* to be a true Muslim:

> [Some] Muslims like to say I am working for Gandhi's agenda and am not a real Muslim. This ideology is very dangerous. They are making me less important in Muslim communities. . . [But] I learned this from the Prophet. There are people who say Gandhi is an enemy of Islam. He was taking funds from everywhere. Muslims have negativity when they see people working on peace because they think this is not the real essence of Islam because there is a lack of original work directly from the Quran and Hadith on peace.[4]

The potential for more original work on specifically Islamic sources of Quran and Hadith on peace to overcome the suspicion that Muslim work for peace is actually too Indian (or Hindu) in following "Gandhi's agenda" is a kind of paradoxical idea. More intentional focus on the specificity of Islamic sources and logics will yield greater intercommunal cooperation, since Islam quite literally means "peace"; put differently, becoming more Islamic will yield greater pluralism, an idea worth exploring further. Yet it is typical of Khudai Khidmatgar's creative responses to the tensions of contemporary Indian politics and society, clouded perpetually by the memory of Partition and contemporary Indo-Pak relations. The idea that Gandhi was "taking funds" from somewhere or that Muslim leaders stand or fall in terms of their importance within Muslim communities makes clear that addressing religion in an activist context is about far more than personal motivation, but about groups, communities, ideologies, nationalism, economics and more: what is religions' intersection with these collective formations and their imaginings?

Belonging: Constructive Work Beyond Church and Nation

Dr. M. Ignatius is a thirty-three year-old social worker who earned his doctorate in this field in 2017. He is a Roman Catholic, and was introduced to me at the central Khudai Khidmatgar location in Ghaffar Manzil, New Delhi in October 2018, and

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[4] Faisal Khan, Personal Interview, New Delhi, October 17, 2018.

recommended by Khidmatgar leaders as offering an important Indian Christian perspective on their work. While not an official member of the Khudai Khidmatgar, he has been in close contact with and participated in several of their actions and is a personal friend and admirer of Faisal Khan. Like Mandloi, he traces his own Christianity to older historical contexts, before the colonial period. In particular, he highlights the beginnings of Catholic missions as a point when the first Dalit converts appeared due to the promise of "respect" from the priests, a pattern followed in his own family when his grandfather likewise converted.[5] As a self-identified follower of Dr. Ambedkar and a "Dalit Christian," Ignatius's comments offer the clearest articulation of the link between Faisal Khan's compassion-oriented religious vision, Indian Christians, Muslims and anti-caste activism. He sees a distinctive understanding and focus on the caste system as fundamental to the Khudai Khidmatgar, in contrast to other activist groups and political parties, such as Indian Communists. For him, this perspective clarifies the large-scale and underlying social structure that is at the root of the wide range of social issues that Khudai Khidmatgar engages. As he urged me at the end of our interview: "You are concerned about these issues. Christianity is facing this problem. There is a lot of inequality and discrimination, please concentrate on this in Christianity in your article." This perspective is similar to that of the recent scholarly work on caste and Dalit activism by scholars such as Aditya Nigam, who critique modernization theory's assumption that caste would fade with education, urbanization, etc. and for call for greater attention to the ways caste infuses the "modern" (Nigam, 2006).

Like Mandloi's attraction to the "activist" Khidmatgar in contrast to the "social work" of the Protestant institutions and church, Ignatius' perspective on Catholicism highlights the shortcomings of the ecclesial establishment. For Dr. Ignatius, however, the contrast is starker: While originally Indian Dalits oppressed by Brahmanism converted for the promise of "respect" offered by Christianity, Ignatius is clear that Christianity has "failed" to adequately address the problem of caste and Dalit oppression. As examples, he cites continuing practices such as separate cemeteries, one for Dalits and one for upper castes connected with the church, and the fact that the "bread crumbs" of Eucharist are still seen by upper caste Christians as polluted if touched by Dalit Christians, since they are "non-veg." Likewise, there is ongoing difficulty for Dalit Roman Catholics to become priests or advance in the church hierarchy (cf. Mosse, 2012). He compares this pervasiveness of caste oppression across religious communities to a similar problematic with Dr. Ambedkar's own turn to Buddhism, which, even in its special justice-oriented Dalit form of Navayana, itself he has developed "caste problems." For him, the only exception to this widespread problematic is that of Dalit converts to Islam, a group, which, he emphasizes, offers evidence of substantive social change for converts. To back up this claim, Dr. Ignatius shared with me the forthcoming dissertation, *Religious Conversion of Meenakhsipuram Dalits*, and highlighted its importance to

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[5] Dr. M. Ignatius, Skype interview, May 22, 2019.

me several times.[6] This Christian perception of a particularly Islamic hope for Dalits, similarly applies to Christian scripture. Indeed, when asked if he sees signs of hope, if not in the Church, then in Jesus or his teaching, Ignatius responded that he did, but resisted giving any example, immediately moving back to the current and historic failings of Christianity. In this context, too, it was Faisal Khan who has been helping Ignatius see beyond the current failings of today's Christianity to appreciate Christian scripture: "If I want to know Christianity, he is ready to tell me there are good things in the Bible itself."

For Mandloi, the net of social issues and projects he is involved in with the Khidmatgar is spread widely. As he describes it, "I have been regularly active with my work in slums, education, in people[s'] rights, tribal rights, so, yeah, and community awareness and communal harmony, against hatred, for peace-building, for Gandhian philosophy." In this broad work, Mandloi had, for example, recently traveled to over 500 villages leading a project focused on connecting laborless villagers with government programs that guaranteed them access to work in their own villages, but that they have difficulty accessing because of lack of awareness, illiteracy, and other challenges. In these contexts, he describes the way in which his team is typically invited into and hosted in Dalit homes, and that they stay together, eat together, exchange views, and simply enjoy the relationships and shared work that local people join in and facilitate. Thus, while he speaks less of caste as the single defining issue that grounds his work than does Dr. Ignatius, the precedence of what he calls humanity over caste identities and boundaries is clear. What brings his and Dr. Ignatius' perspectives together is a focus on responding proactively to "communal incidents," often in connection with issues faced especially by Muslims and Dalits, such as violence related to beef. As Dr. Ignatius put it, the issue of beef eating and related violence, especially affects Muslims and Dalits. For Indian Christians, these attacks and pressure, he says, causes them to downplay or hide their non-vegetarian eating practices, lest they come to suffer the same consequences. When asked, Mandloi situates such incidents within his general description of the emergence of a more proactive attitude among Muslim youth in recent times, itself evident in the Khidmatgar movement, citing the "suppression" of Muslims in recent times to be a significant contributing factor to this dynamic shift:

> [F]or Muslims there was a lot of suppression [for] a few decades. More and more people realized that one of the major reasons they were not able to progress was education and awareness. Anyone who got educated tried to inspire a few within the family and within the community . . . [and] the suppression was one of the major reasons. I can talk about the Gujarat genocide or a few other things [that] happened. So that people feel that

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[6] https://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/current-affairs/150918/chennai-thol-thirumavalavan-to-get-doctorate-soon.html, accessed June 1, 2019.

you should be aware of your rights, you should be aware of the laws, you should be aware of the importance of unity in the community and you should be aware of peace within the community and interfaith dialogue. It was more of religious prejudice because it was all politics, the chief minister at that time or the party to which he belonged, are into power and their political ideology is based on religion, only one religion and they are not into interfaith dialogue and other stuff so…they are kind of you know, we just want the rule of one religion, so that was one of the major reasons.

Awareness of these particular and spreading types of suppression and violence has led Mandloi and other Khidmatgar members to form and send teams of lawyers and activists to affected communities in a number of cases. They go on fact-finding missions to help victims and their families pursue justice, but, more importantly, Mandloi says, is the way in which these teams intervene in situations where tensions are rising. As he describes it, the work of the teams in that case is to bring leaders and different communities together for open communication; keeping channels open in this way, he says, is essential since what tends to happen right before violence escalates is that "people stop talking." For him, the work of Khidmatgar teams is in direct contradiction to the religious politics of the present government with its "only one religion" approach that rules out dialogue between religions. Most importantly, perhaps, his comments emphasize that the suppression has itself met with a strong response from within the Muslim community, indeed appearing as a kind of wakeup call for engaging in educational and legal systems in new ways, advocacy and spreading a message of change within their families and communities. Since Khudai Khidmatgar is focused on "peoples' issues," Mandloi emphasizes that their own work is not different than the work of ordinary people, but, rather, is inspired by, grounded in, and indeed draws on wider, exemplary acts of solidarity. He makes a connection between the way Muslims have responded to suppression and his own situation as an Indian Christian in Madhya Pradesh,

Even Christians were suppressed. Several churches were suppressed in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. A lot of things happened. This actually acted as a bridge [because] the [wider] Muslim community actually stood with us. They were helping and even the Hindu community they came and protected the churches.

As mentioned above, an emphasis on what Mandloi calls the "crying", those suffering—from domestic urban workers, the rural unemployed and farmers, to, above all, victims of religious and caste oppression—grounds the meaning of this type of social activism. Importantly, in this aspect, we can say that the Khudai Khidmatgar departs from liberal, secular models by attending to difference rather than embracing the neutral affirmation of the universal (Chakrabarty, 2013). In part, this is likely what Dr. Ignatius means when he says that is the "idea of humanity" that he learned only from Khudai Khidmatgar is the "most important" way in which

his own work connects and contributes to anti-caste work. He had read about it in many books but only in the Khudai Khidmatgar did he see it in "practice." But many of these programs and incidents are somewhat removed from everyday life in their level of drama, with attacks and violations at their core, or even grand evocation of historical exemplars of social activists. What of the practice of humanity on the especially mundane levels, such as domestic life? How do abstract affirmations of "humanity" (*insaniyat*) and more formal projects, programs and protests, so central to Khudai Khidmagar, to Faisal Khan, and Indian Christians involved with them, work out on even more concrete levels of the practical, what we might call the everyday?

At the Khidmatgar's own center in New Delhi, the everyday challenges and potentials of belonging are lived out most clearly in an experiment known as "Sab ka Ghar", a communal apartment in the neighborhood Ghaffar Manzil, near Jamia Milia Islamia University. The house is open to anyone to come stay, for 3 nights to a month, and features a room that functions at times as a group bedroom, lecture hall, discussion seminar room, worship space, and more, adjacent to a kitchen where residents all share cooking, cleaning, serving and other daily tasks.[7] The location of Sab ka Ghar is itself important: While not technically a "slum" Ghaffar Manzil exists in the grey area between the slum and the "middle class", its location and its almost exclusively Muslim demographic where many domestic workers live holds special meaning, especially for its Hindu members. Indeed, upstairs is the shared apartment of Faisal Khan and Dr. Kush Singh, a Hindu doctor who joined KK. After meeting Faisal Khan and deciding to not only join Khudai Khidmatgar but to move in with him, Dr. Kush and his new roommate received media and government attention for the way in which their shared work can be thought of as undermining communalism.[8] Thus, we can say that the social and justice orientation of Khudai Khidmatgar happens at its most everyday and intimate in the experience of experimental common living space. My first interview with Khidmatgar members took place in Sab ka Ghar and members, such as Sahil Ahmed, emphasized the mundane dimensions of shared life here: for men especially need to learn important lessons from doing household work, usually reserved for servants or women. This habit of domestic service is, he pointed out, modeled by Faisal Khan himself. In this way, the experiment in shared, living in close quarters is understood by members as working out a kind of utopianism, or as pointing towards ideal future possibilities for common life, of course, in some ways comparable to Gandhi's experiments with ashram living. But the particularly utopian element as described by members is marked not by a narrow Gandhianism, but by its openness to and awareness of the many ideologies that aim towards such futures. Faisal Khan puts, "If Karl Marx were alive, he would come to Sab ka Ghar." Undoubtedly, Marx would have interesting conversations on religion with members who practice their religion openly and

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[7] Site visit and interviews with Khudai Khidmatgar leaders, Sahil Ahmed, Dr. Kush Singh and others, Sab ka Ghar, October 8, 2019.

[8] https://thewire.in/religion/communal-harmony-social-experiment, accessed June 1, 2019.

materially in this very space, from *namaz* and Krishna puja to Christian led meditations on the crucifixion and Easter.

Beyond a Secular Stance towards a Religious Politics of Care

If attention to the pain of those whose difference has provoked attack marks the Khudai Khidmatgar as outside models of liberalism, their methods similarly emphasize much more than electoral politics or even social activism. Working on supporting and forming "good people" stresses individual and community transformation in an embodied, everyday sense. In other words, justice and nonviolence has as much to do with washing dishes and sleeping on bedrolls, sharing chai, informality, friendliness, and the feeling of flow and commonality—as it does with voting registration, election results, or even street protests. Similarly, as suggested above, the movement's particular honesty, openness about, even encouragement for religious belief and practice marks it as a particular kind of secular stance.

In addition to an emphasis on mercy and compassion as essential to religion and their own shared mission, the citation of scriptural story, and support for concrete devotional expression and ritual, religious dimensions of Khidmatgar life center on the concrete, material and "practical" –for example, as in clothing. As Faisal Khan described the type of person who can become an authentic advocate of nonviolence, he repeatedly uses the phrases "moderate" or "practical Muslim." When asked what these terms mean, he describes, first, his mother: someone who prayed regularly, gives people food, and "understands people's pain." When asked to elaborate further on the idea of a "practical" Muslim, he says:

> If a person is looking like Muslims. If he is a person of faith, trustworthy [*imandar*]. As in, if I'm only doing it to write a book but my life is totally against the teachings, I'm not a practical Muslim. The same thing was applicable to Gandhi ji, also. If Gandhi did not dress the way he dressed, like *faqirs*, and wore western clothing, no one would have accepted him. What if Gandhi put on jeans and a t-shirt? (laughter) If I were in a drama doing the role of a king, dressing like a peon, what would happen? Therefore, dress is very important. In societies like Pakistan, India, Bangladesh it is even more important.

Note Faisal Khan's subtle shift from addressing a tension and possible contrast between discussing versus actually living nonviolence, to questions of sartorial style, people's perceptions, and cultural contexts. While this shift might seem perplexing, the direct connection between dressing in Indian clothing and authentic practice of nonviolence is grounded in the morality and religious importance of dress is fundamental in this context. First, he moves directly to Gandhi as an example,

whose own choices of dress carried with them immense significance and in many ways indexed his own developing understandings of nonviolence. Gandhi's increasing embrace of poverty and public and political identification with poor people and so-called untouchables took shape primarily through his dress and his public interpretations of it (Tarlo, 1996). Second, he describes Gandhi's dress not merely in terms of simplicity or even identification with peasants, but by its similarity to the dress of *faqirs*, religious mendicants whose spiritual vocation is enabled, shaped, communicated most clearly in their dress (Tambiah, 1984; Dobe, 2015). The issue of respect for indigenous traditions, of appropriateness, is also related to Gandhi's *swadeshi* program of *khadi* spinning, and the requirements of acceptance for an authentic leader. Third, while western discourse often assumes a model in which outward appearance is contrasted (the inner vs. the outer) with or seen as irrelevant to deep authenticity, a number of Indian traditions begin with assuming a number of important relationships between the inner and the outer, including the moral qualities of cloth (Cohn, 1996). The outer can in fact shape inner realities and perceptions in important and appropriate ways, an assumption Faisal Khan identifies especially with South Asian contexts, but as also relevant more universally.

This last point resonates with another distinctive saying of Khan's on the nature of religion itself: "Religion is for make-up." That is, in contrast to Protestant western models of religion that tend to emphasize the inner and/or belief-centered essence of true religion, Khan presents authentic religion via analogies with adornment and the aesthetic: "I grew up believing that [religion] is like a make-up box. Religion is for make-up, not for break up. It is for beautification . . . For example, churches, temples, mosques are like beauty parlors. We go to beauty parlors to make our skins shiny. Similarly, we go to temples for spiritual shining." Thus, while Khudai Khidmatgar experiments with new forms of individual religious, and community life as it imagines a future, nation-wide realization of new forms of relationship and mutual compassion, they do not imagine themselves as a unique, isolated community or movement. Rather, just as Faisal Khan emphasizes the need for Khidmatgar members and especially leaders to embody an everyday sense of their own religious tradition and appearance, they are a community rooted in and responsive to the communities around them. Sab ka Ghar, while belonging officially to no particular religious community is conceived as analogous to a temple or mosque, one that even Marx might visit for a spiritual exfoliation and nail polish. We might say that the distinctive emphasis of many South Asian subjectivities linking self and other (Arnold and Blackburn, 2004) is mirrored here in the religious dimensions of the inner and the outer, and the aesthetic. Indeed, Khan went on right after discussing Gandhi's clothing and authenticity by making just such connections, this time contrasting the western failure of care and the tight linkages of South Asian communities.

> There are values, culture, etc. and are very strong in these places. Everyone interferes in each other's lives. People in countries such as Europe or the

> US don't ask you what you are wearing, eating, etc. Even if you die, they won't ask. Here, even if you get fever, ten people will come ask you, what happened and why it happened. Society is very tightly linked. People are more conscious about those around them.

The similarity of sensibility described here to what Roberts describes as "care" in the slum community he studied adds another connection between this activist community in New Delhi and the nuances and everyday practice of the foreignness of belonging. Much like Faisal's description of his mother's character as a Muslim being rooted in her ability to "understand the pain of others", Roberts describes care in terms of heightened perception, right down to the cultivated ability to literally "see" when people are hungry (2016: 71-78). The idea of "interfering" in the lives others, too, has its parallel in the common practice of "scolding" those within the community, itself a sign of belonging that could extend even to a white, American anthropologist living in the slum (2016: 29-30).

We should not, however, take Khan's reference to Gandhi or appeal to South Asian culture as a distraction from his main point, since these are all examples used within a discussion of the authenticity of Muslim nonviolence—as *Muslim*. While citing Gandhi as a positive example of authentic practice and acceptance as a leader, Khan's example itself highlights the important fit of context and particularity, of appropriateness, pointing towards the congruence of nonviolence and Islam for a real, "practical Muslim." In fact, the specific context of Islam for nonviolence leads Faisal to elaborate on the idea that Muslims hardly need Gandhi to learn about nonviolence, citing Badshah Khan, the founder of the original Khudai Khidmatgar himself. As Faisal put it, "Badshah Khan said, 'I learned satyagraha from the land of Taif.' When the Prophet (pbuh) was visiting Taif, people were throwing stones at him. But he was reciting prayers for them saying, 'Oh Allah these people don't know I'm the messenger of God so please forgive them.' He was not throwing stones back but was praying for the people of Taif. This is satyagraha." [9] This understanding of the particular, and independent, Islamic grounding of Badshah Khan's nonviolence and its manifestation in the Khudai Khidmatgar movement echoes a major ethnographic study of the movement (Banerjee, 2001: 145-166). Khan's point that he is "not influenced by Gandhi" but "by Islam" in his belief in nonviolence then is not only credible, but especially important given, as Irfan Ahmad has argued, the repeated and consistent positioning of Badshah Khan as a derivative figure, a

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[9] Faisal Khan also cited Quranic *surahs* (Surah 27) in support of nonviolence: "There is a Surah in the Quran, in which Allah says, "Oh Muslims recall when an ant was protecting organizing a March "Until when they came to the Valley of Ants, an ant said: 'O you ants! Get into your habitations, so that Solomon and his hosts may not crush you, being unaware'. There is no value of an ant's life. You can't go into jail for killing a [ant's] life. But according to Allah, you shouldn't even hurt an ant."

secondary Gandhi, a kind of Muslim exception that proves the rule of Islam's violent essence (Ahmad, 2017: 182-184).

Taking the specificity and independence of a thoroughly Islamic nonviolence seriously naturally leads to the question of the specificity of a Christian, or better, Indian Christian nonviolence as conceived by the Indian Christians associated with Khudai Khidmatgar. Here too, the kind of standard Gandhian narratives contested by Banerjee and Ahmad are best held at arms-length. For those narratives have often attributed Gandhi's own nonviolence, with its emphasis on love of the enemy, directly to Jesus' teaching to "love your enemies" and turn the other cheek (Bondurant, 1988). Yet, as we have already seen, this is very far from the perspective of an Indian Christian such as Dr. Ignatius, whose main emphasis in his comments on either Indian Christian history is its total failure to address caste equality. As noted, this critical emphasis remained true even when asked directly about Jesus' teaching itself.

While Mandloi's comments on Christian scripture and Christ's teaching were more extensive and more positive, they similarly made no mention of Christ's teaching on the love of enemies or of nonviolence in the sense of rejecting violent methods of protest. Instead, for Mandloi, as suggested above, there is a significant convergence of the Khidmatgar's commitment to a compassion-oriented stance for justice and the core meaning of Christianity.

> As a Christian I should stand against injustice, or I should help. Any caste….I should help, I should lend my helping hand to them. There are several incidents in the Bible, in the Old Testament, [the Jews] are crying for help. For example, Zaccheus, Jesus went to his home. At the same time Jesus visited his temple [and said], "You made my temple a place of trade, "It should be a place of people, it should be a place of tolerance." [Pause.] During the end times, people would say, 'I stood with Christianity, so why I am not in heaven?'. 'But you didn't stand for the people who were crying. If you didn't stand for them, you didn't stand for me. Those who weren't believers, they stood with them, so they stood for me.' That is what religion is to me, that is what Christianity is.

In this rich set of allusions, Mandloi grounds his sense of being compelled to "help" or "stand for the people who were crying" in a range of scriptural reference. Spanning the Hebrew Scriptures and, at least, three separate Gospel narratives in roughly thirty seconds, he gestures towards some of the Bible's most often-cited "justice" texts. The Gospel stories of Zaccheus, the tax collector who repaid those he had cheated and gave an extra half of his own money to the poor (Luke, 19: 1-10), of Jesus "cleansing of the temple" (all four Gospels) and, perhaps the most famously, "sheep and the goats" final judgement narrative (Matthew, 25:31-46) in favor of the "least of these." Mandloi's collapsing of these stories together—almost

into a single narrative, including Hebrew scripture, creates its own kind of hermeneutic, suggesting a starting point in the context of the Khidmatgar's activist commitments. Mandloi's own creative re-reading is further suggested in his adoption of the phrase "the people who were crying" into the Gospel of Matthew text (Sugirtharajah, 2012). In this sense, he looks to Hebrew narratives –suggested by his repeated use of the English phrase "crying"—in which Israel cries to God and God responds to their cry, perhaps best exemplified in the Psalms: "He inclined and heard my cry" (Psalm, 40). In this way, Mandloi layers Jesus' ethical teachings and an image of God central in Jewish experience—God as a divine helper, savior, and defender. More broadly, as well, centering his reading around tears can be related to the important roles of weeping in Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and devotional Hindu traditions (Patton and Hawley, 2005).

Such comparative, interreligious contexts are quite appropriate here, not only because of Indian Christian participation in this pluralistic activist community, but more specifically because of what Mandloi calls the "composite culture" of India. This is something he associates, again, especially with Muslims and Christians:

> That's something which I always share. Because people within the Christian community and within the Muslim community, they don't know much about the composite culture, from Abraham to David to Moses, or even Israel, people don't know much about it so I always talk about it and I always take time . . . I have to tell them, Jesus Christ was born in Jerusalem, so its nothing to do with US or the UK. Christianity was much earlier in India for almost 2, 000 years.

More specifically, "composite culture" for Mandloi means not so much the history of interreligious interaction or pluralistic shared cultural practices in South Asia, but shared founding figures, shared people whose status as prophets and patriarchs exists in and across separate scriptures. Once a kind of normalized scriptural boundary separating the Quran from the Bible is breached, Mandloi progressively moves on and crosses others, more broadly cultural and historical, destabilizing the assumed Anglo-American character of Christianity itself. He does so, again by linking the story and location of an originary prophet, that of Jesus—"born in Jerusalem" with a new context, a context of belonging, of home, in India's long history. The "belonging" of Christianity in India, with implications for Indian Islam, forms an interpretive horizon for the text and vice versa, and recalls longstanding discourses of the "Asian Christ" in South Asian contexts, such as those of Keshub Chandra Sen (Sen, 1979).[10] The textuality of a kind of contextual Bible study is fine-grained;

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[10] Keshub Chandra Sen (1838-1884) was an early modern, Hindu leader from Bengal whose 1866 lecture, "Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia," challenged Eurocentric understanding of Jesus, in favor of a view of Christ as a "yogi", foreshadowing what would become a standard element of twentieth-century Hindu, and sometimes Christian, commentary on Jesus' identity.

starting with seemingly simple acts of translation, of naming and renaming, and eventually, leading to a recognition that makes people "get curious" and ask "tell me more about it" to build a "bridge": "The Bible is translated in several languages. I know terms in the Hindi Bible, Urdu Bible, Marathi Bible. For Musa that is Moses, Daud that is David. Prophet Musa. It's something that we know about it." Thus, Mandloi's sense of Indian Christian-Muslim relationships emerges not only out of scripture itself, but out of reflection on his own contextual practice of engaging multiple translations of the supposedly single Christian scripture, the pedagogical context of engaging people's, specifically Christian and Muslim, curiosity. The emergence of interreligious bridges thus depends and draws on indigenous history and especially local knowledge: "It's something that we know about." Similarly, Mandloi's focus on prophets is notable, especially when seen in relationship to western Christian attempts to center comparative or pluralist theological projects on names of God (Allah/Elohim) or scripture and revelation (Miles, 2018) more generally.

Conclusion

Interviews with Indian Christians and their fellow Khidmatgars reveal that the shared ambiguities of belonging—of accusations of foreignness, related attacks and the potential for a solidarity of "the crying"—are a productive way to think about this instance of Christian-Muslim relationship. Like the Pentecostal slum dwellers described by Roberts (2016), what seems on first glance to be something like an Enlightenment concept of a universalism in the figure of "humanity", manifests in a simultaneous refutation of difference, of caste, for example, or, for the Khidmatgars, also especially of religion—and a trained attention to it. In Mandloi's case, a social activist stance meant to move beyond a kind of social work that was over-identified with Christian institutions and join an inclusive community whose workers related "irrespective of religion." In his words, his work with Faisal Khan and others is not "as a Christian." But, in both the case of slum Pentecostals and Christian Khidmatgars, humanity has a gravitational center, a focus weighted by the experience of difference, a commitment to solidarity, and homely or hospitable affirmations of and experiments in particular, human connection. To believe in humanity is to look for and respond to the pain of others, especially of Muslims, Dalits, and Christians, a concern that unites both Mandloi and Dr. Ignatius perspectives' with Faisal Khan's. Taking a cue from Faisal Khan, too, we can start to see a more constructive kind of attention, as well, that is to see religious traditions of self and other in terms of a fundamental attractiveness, a provocation to one's own desire, to love. This love means seeing every place of worship, every temple, as a beauty parlor, where particular embodied languages, religious rituals and styles serve to adorn the individual in community, rather than the positing of an abstract reason, autonomy, or self-reliance of the individual (cf. Roberts, 2016; 17).

This and other dimensions of the Khudai Khidmatgar may contribute to thinking about what I term a broader politics of care, and carry with them potential for further questioning, analysis, and theorization. How might the specific links between distinct "foreign" religious communities in trans-religious terms (*dharma*), centered on attention to the pain of others and the beauty of religion, inform a more general theory of (South Asian) religion/s? Can the shared forms of/common everyday life, rooted in intervention and housed within experimental forms of community, welcome religious ritual and offer a "prefigurative politics" (Engler and Engler, 2016) for wider circles of South Asian publics and political communities? Why do shared counter-histories of belonging so often center on exemplary persons, here, Muslim-Christian *prophetic* models, understood in terms of critique and nonviolence (cf. Ahmad, 2017)? Rather than travel down these pathways, however, the above discussion has attempted to acknowledge the voices of the Khidmatgars themselves and their central place. As anthropologists such as Leela Prasad have argued (2006), it is crucial to allow the space for theory to emerge from indigenous categories, contexts, and collaborative conversations; I see these questions and suggestions as possible futures generated by this paper.

A final question more directly implied in the above discussion, however, is: How far is the concept of humanity able to stretch, for Indian Christians, for the Khidmatgar; does it apply to westerners? Khan's contrast of South Asian forms of awareness of others with the cold indifference of Euro-Americans (even if you die, they won't ask!) suggests something other than the "myth of the benevolent foreigner" explored by Roberts (2016: 76-77), for example, suggesting a closer connection between Indian Christians and Indian Muslims or South Asians generally than between Indians and non-Indians, perhaps. Similarly, Mandloi's and Dr. Ignatius' suspicion of Christianity itself or, at least, western Christianity, offers serious critique of Christian claims to universality and equality, or, in more recent terms, even its unique commitment to translation and translatability (Sanneh, 2015). Part of the answer, again, offered here comes from listening to the voices in and around the Khidmatgar movement itself. Mr. David Albert, current Board Chairman of Friendly Water for the World, an international aid organization focused on supporting water infrastructure in communities in need of it, has also been drawn to the work of the Khudai Khidmatgar. He has traveled closely and trained with Faisal Khan and Khidmatgar teams on several occasions in recent times, and works closely with Inamul Hassan, who is both India coordinator for Friendly Water and national coordinator of Khudai Khidmatgar.

Of course, whether Mr. Albert, himself a Quaker, is a part of *Indian* Christianity or not is an interesting question in itself. His connections with India certainly run deep on personal and professional levels throughout his sixty-nine years, including his adopted Indian daughter. His graduate director in political science at Chicago University, Hannah Arendt, taught him in the early 1970s that western political philosophy needed to look beyond Euro-American models; and it was her untimely

death that spurred Albert to leave graduate school completely in favor of a life in India, where he stayed for decades in Gandhian ashrams, most recently in Gandhigram.[11] His specific work in India brought him into close relationship with Krishnammal Jagannathan, the Gandhian Dalit leader, and her husband, key figures in the *bhudan* (land gift and reform) movement of Vinoba Bhave (Coppo and Albert, 2004). Albert is so close to her in fact that Krishnammal is "more or less" his Indian daughter's grandmother. One might argue, as have some in the case of Charlie Andrews and Samuel Stokes and other British and American Gandhian Christians, that David Albert's deep Gandhian commitments and long life in India and work for and with Indians justifiably lead to his inclusion in the category of Indian Christianity. Indeed, it might be that Christianity is the more questionable category, as he sees it, when applied to him.[12]

When asked about the role of non-Indian development workers and activists in dealing with Indian social issues today, he emphasizes local agency and empowerment, bottom up cooperation and Indian leadership. He illustrates this attitude of what he called "showing up" and living alongside as a precondition to solidarity by mentioning his own choice to sleep in the Rohingya refugee camps in south Delhi and in Sab ka Ghar, rather than in hotels. For him, simple, shared domestic life helps illustrate how such everyday acts can build the kind of relationships necessary for collaboration and solidarity. These attitudes and approaches are rooted in his own Quakerism; as he says:

> In the Quaker tradition, it originally comes from nonviolence. Once you've decided to not kill someone—you can kill somebody a lot of ways—and once you've decided not to kill, how far do you extend that idea out? …. I'm a small 'd' democrat…we don't have enough people at the table and we don't have the right people at the table. If you are dealing with climate change and water issues, you need a large number of people from sub-Saharan Africa and central India at the table who are the most directly affected and probably have the largest share of the possibility of solutions. My kind of Quaker sits in silent worship, you know, we're listening. . . . I know how to talk, so learning to listen well does not come easily for me, and yet that's among the most important things I've learned. So if you're listening for God, you're also listening for God in other people.

The nonviolence of Quakerism, as expressed by a Gandhian American rooted in India, suggests not so much the myth of the benevolent foreigner, but the possibility

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[11] Mr. David H. Albert, Skype Interview, May 10, 2019.

[12] "While I don't particularly mind the characterization, I personally never call myself a Christian. Being a Quaker is hard enough! I learn from the teachings and actions of Jesus - but I don't believe in the narrative of salvation, original sin, the death and resurrection, etc. Most Christians would consider me to be beyond the pale." Private e-mail communication, July 30, 2019.

and actuality of experiments in everyday belonging and solidarity. It is not so surprising then that Faisal Khan has deeply embraced David Albert in their shared work, despite his critique of a lack of care for others in European and American societies, or that Albert's Quakerism resonates with that of Mandloi and Dr. Ignatius' religious orientation in its other-directed ethic and theology. If there is a continued or irreducible foreignness to belonging, and tensions entangled in forms of difference, then points of connection or convergence become all the more precious. Humanity, which Faisal Khan understands primarily but not exclusively within his own Islamic tradition, mediates, connects, and attracts—in its religious dimension it is for beautification, to create or reveal the desirable. In his words, humanity possesses a particular and ever-expanding propensity to love others that remains simultaneously haunted by violence. It is in fact because of this love that even the quintessential Indian, the iconic Hindu Gandhi, ultimately could not belong to the new nation. As Faisal Khan explains, "And then you'll ask me why I love Gandhi. Gandhi is very close to humanity. I love Meera, I love Bulle Shah also, and Nizam ud din Auliya. Any religion should be based on three things: love, equality, and justice. If you are working for love, justice, and equality, I will love you. Gandhi even was killed [by a Hindu nationalist] for these three values and for protecting the rights of others."

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Book Review

Sahoo, Sarbeswar. (2018) *Pentecostalism and Politics of Conversion in India*. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press. xviii + 203 pages.

In his second monograph, *Pentecostalism and Politics of Conversion in India*, Sarbeswar Sahoo invites readers to explore the multifaceted and historically diverse issue of religious conversion in modern India. Sahoo is particularly interested in understanding and explaining the dramatic rise of anti-Christian violence in India. His introduction cites research findings published by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life that identifies India as a country with "very high social hostilities" toward Christians. Likewise, the 2016 annual report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) indicates that there is "tacit support" coupled with deliberate attempts to inflame communal tension on the part of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Sahoo seeks to contextualize a shift in the "master narrative of Indian politics in the postcolonial period." The colonial and early post-colonial focus on Hindu-Muslim communalism (violence directed toward a specific religious and/or ethnic group) has given way to a recent shift in the political discourse toward Hindu-Christian conflict. "A survey of the recent literature shows that almost nothing has been written about Hindu-Christian conflict in contemporary India" (2). Sahoo seeks to fill this lacuna by contextualizing the rise of what some commentators have dubbed a form of modern Indian "Christianophobia."

Among Indian Christians, individuals, groups and institutions who identify as or who are identified by others as "Pentecostal" have received the brunt of the recent upsurge of anti-Christian violence. Accordingly, both Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant denominations in India have sought to distance themselves from this "new breed" of Charismatic, Pentecostal missionaries whose activism in northern India has drawn the ire of the Sangh Parivar family of organizations. The extent to which internal dissonance between Christian denominations may in itself contribute to the proliferation of anti-Christian violence is an issue that deserves additional investigation. Sahoo enumerates several tasks that he wants to accomplish with his book. He seeks to explain: why anti-Christian violence has increased since the 1990s; why adivasis, Tribals, and Dalits convert overwhelmingly to Pentecostal forms of Christianity rather than to Catholic or mainline Protestant denominations; and what the implications of religious conversion within indigenous communities might be vis-à-vis the "broader issues of secularism, religious freedom and democratic rights…" (7). In order to provide a "holistic interpretation" of recent anti-Christian violence, Sahoo identifies three trajectories of investigation. First, he seeks to clarify the roles played by two differing and "competing projects of conversion" (identified as the projects of "Christian missionaries" and the projects of "Hindu

nationalists"). Alongside these competing conversion projects, Sahoo explores the "politicization of identity in relation to competitive electoral politics" and the "dynamics of the (BJP-led) development state." He concludes that each component is "integrally related to the production of anti-Christian violence in India" (7).

Sahoo also expresses an interest in "understanding the 'life-world' of the 'believers' (*biswaasi*/converts)" and in analyzing "their everyday subjective experiences and 'ordinary theology'" to ascertain "why they believe in what they believe in" (10). Sahoo's stated interest in the theology of the converts themselves—in "what they believe in"—is a topic that he necessarily revisits throughout his study. In addition to his desire to explicate expressions of lived theology in tribal communities, Sahoo explores a variety of views concerning religious conversion from the perspectives of a number of social actors. His study is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted primarily among the Bhils located in the southernmost part of the northwestern Indian state of Rajasthan. Sahoo indicates that he interviewed hundreds of converts, older and first-generation alike, and that his informants also included "Hindu nationalists," both tribal and caste Hindu. The perhaps overly rosy depictions of the conversion and post-conversion experiences offered by many tribal informants may be attributable to Sahoo's entrée into village life. In light of such concerns, the author notes:

> …one major drawback to my approach was that my entry into village-churches and tribal Christian communities was initially facilitated by Pentecostal missionaries themselves.   While it had its advantages, it often made me hear similar stories—stories of positive transformation in the post-conversion period. Perhaps because of this, when I presented part of this book at various academic conferences I was often told that my analysis is sympathetic to the missionaries' perspective. Though I partly agree with this, I must emphasize that I have examined the work of the missionaries critically and situated them in relation to the perspectives of other groups, communities and agents who have also been involved in the processes of cultural and religious change in rural Rajasthan (18).

Sahoo provides the central argument for the project on page 7: "…this book asserts that ideological incompatibility and antagonism between Christian missionaries and Hindu nationalists provide[s] only a partial explanation of anti-Christian violence in India." Each chapter explores a different aspect of the connection between communal violence and religious conversion. After circumscribing the broader topic under investigation in the introduction, chapter two continues by exploring the growth of tribal Pentecostal churches in India. Four differing "narratives" about religious conversion are analyzed in the third chapter. Chapter four is dedicated to examining why large numbers of adivasi women in particular have been attracted

to Pentecostal traditions. Chapter five seeks to explicate the sometimes hidden, sometimes visible linkages that connect Hindutva politics with the rise of anti-Christian violence in India. Sahoo concludes by revisiting the "competing projects of conversion" highlighted throughout the study and identifies the central issues of concern among the various stakeholders examined (i.e. Pentecostal Christian missionaries, tribal converts, *samskriti* Tribals and Hindu nationalists).[1]

Chapter two sketches a history of the development of Pentecostal Christian traditions in India broadly and in Rajasthan more specifically. The importance of contextualizing conversion in Indian Pentecostal forms of Christianity and the concomitant rise in anti-Christian violence cannot be overstated. While the "secularization thesis" may have been useful for understanding "post-modern" social life in Paris, London or New York City, Sahoo clearly demonstrates that it is not applicable in Asia. Pentecostal Christianity represents "the fastest expanding religious movement worldwide in the twentieth century." Furthermore, the highest concentration of Pentecostal traditions is found in the Global South placing mainline churches "on the margin of global Christianity." Citing the work of Stanley Burgess, Sahoo indicates that "In India, by the year 2000, the Pentecostals had grown to approximately 33.5 million strong, ranking fifth in the world (behind Brazil, the United States, China and Nigeria) for total numbers" (22). In Rajasthan, as in northern India generally, Pentecostal traditions have grown by attracting new members (i.e., by means of conversion rather than through demographic expansion) primarily from among tribal and Dalit communities and persons considered to be of low social rank in traditional caste hierarchies. To understand the contemporary experiences of Indian Christians, it is necessary to examine the rapid rise of Christian traditions among marginalized groups; Dalits comprise 50% and adivasis 20% of all Christians in India today. While the Christian population is growing, Sahoo's study is less clear regarding the impact that conversions to Pentecostal forms of Christianity has on the total number of Indian Christians (less than 3% of the total population of India).

In the second chapter, Sahoo also seeks to explain why Pentecostal conversion movements have been more successful than their Catholic and mainline Protestant counterparts. Among the reasons he cites for the relative success of Pentecostal missionaries is that Pentecostal forms of Christianity and indigenous belief systems share much of the same basic worldview. In a 2010 book *McDonaldisation, Masala McGospel and Om Economics: Televangelism in Contemporary India*, Jonathan James, following social theorist George Ritzer's "McDonaldisation theory," proposed what he called a "full-circle accommodation model." Linking "Hinduism," the "New Age movement," and "Pentecostal Christianity," James claimed that 19th and 20th

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[1] Instead of using the designation "Hindu," Sahoo notes that Tribals in Bengal and Rajasthan self-identify as *samsaric log* (or a variant thereof).

century forms of Charismatic Christianity—initially influenced by "Hinduism" and New Age ideas about health, wealth, and the power of positive thinking—have now come full-circle and are impacting India (and "Hinduism") in significant ways. James sought to substantiate his claim by analyzing contemporary televangelists (both Christian and, more recently, Hindu alike) and Pentecostal conversions elicited through television programs.[2] While Sahoo does not propose a "full-circle accommodation model," he does nonetheless point to certain inherent ideological similarities shared in common between indigenous cosmologies and Christian Pentecostalism. Central to both the indigenous and Pentecostal worldviews is a pervasive "belief in evil spirits" that must be subjugated by religious professionals or adepts. As Sahoo puts it, "This Pentecostal belief in miracles, wonders and spirit worship, which have [has] also been an integral part of the tribal religion and worldview, finds easy acceptance in tribal society." Shared ideas such as these facilitate the Pentecostal conversion process because adivasis need not "radically transform their worldview and belief system" (37). By a "process of demonisation" coupled with an emphasis on the active work of the Holy Spirit, "Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity, makes indigenous spirits representatives of the devil and tribal daily life is thus viewed as an ongoing 'spiritual warfare' between the demon or evil and the good spirit" (36). Recent converts interviewed as a part of Sahoo's study routinely reported the following reasons for seeking religious change: (1) the presence of physical and spiritual miracles, (particularly faith healings—which were often sought only after traditional medical practices and shamanic healing had failed—were the most commonly mentioned miracles), (2) the gift of "speaking in tongues," (3) gaining the power to overcome alcoholism or other bad habits, (4) the strengthening of family relations, and (5) the ability to forge "new identities" both "assertive and empowering."

Chapter three, one of the longest in the book (chapter five, "Seen as the Alien: Hindutva Politics and Anti-Christian Violence," is of equal length) is arguably the heart of the project. It provides for the book's readership four competing narratives about religious conversion. Crucial for understanding the salient issues in discussions about religious conversion in India today is the fact that both Christian missionaries and Hindu nationalists alike invoke the concept of "freedom of religion" to bolster their work among indigenous, tribal or Dalit communities. Sahoo identifies these conflicting views about "religious freedom" as being the core issue at stake:

> The central question is whether Dalits and adivasis convert out of genuine spiritual belief and free will, or whether they are induced to convert via

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[2] James, 2010. For reviews of the book, see those of Chad Bauman in *The Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies* 24 (2011), available at https://doi.org/10.7825/2164-6279.1492 and Robert Stephens in the *Journal of International and Global Studies* 3/2 (2012).
Available at [http://www.oalib.com/journal/11651/1#.XJUJRShKhPY].

material means and association with a powerful group of missionaries. The issues of free will versus force and spiritual belief versus inducement are central to the debate on religious conversion, especially to Christianity, in India. The issues signify not just the mismatch between Hindu nationalists and Christian missionaries in their understanding of conversion in India, but also points to how both groups have relied on the Constitution to justify or to resist religious conversion (50-51).

Sahoo's interest in presenting a holistic picture of religious conversion in contemporary India is evident in chapters three, four, and five. While sociological studies of religious conversion have focused on social factors such as the importance of understanding the cultural contexts and social networks of converts, psychological studies have prioritized "biographical factors." Anthropological studies have examined mass conversions of particular communities but "most have privileged the convert's accounts or the agent's perspective without adequately discussing the perceptions of other stakeholders of conversion." Economists have highlighted the cost-benefit analysis of converts but lacking still is a scholarly "literature that comprises the 'collective cultural narratives' of different social groups involved in the processes of conversion" (58).

Sahoo analyzed the "collective cultural narratives" of four social groups: Hindu nationalists, Christian missionaries, adivasi Hindus, and adivasi converts. Each narrative may be roughly summarized as follows. The "Hindu nationalist narrative" of the Sangh Parivar family of organizations is vested in defending the "purity of the nation." As one of Sahoo's informants who self-identified as a Rajasthan Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad [RVKP] activist put the matter: "*Dharmantaran* [religious conversion] means leaving the *indigenous culture* and adopting a *foreign* one" (59). In this narrative about conversion, shifting one's identity from "Hindu" to "Sikh" for example is not considered a "religious conversion" since the Sikh tradition is thought to be native to India. The Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, and Sikh traditions are considered to be among the *samsaric* or *dharmic* family of religions indigenous to India. The designation of "religious conversion" is reserved for individual or collective shifts away from traditions deemed "native" to "foreign" ones such as Islam or Christianity. Of note here is the relatively recent development of a spate of cultural activities intended to "re-convert" persons back to "Hinduism." *Shuddhikaran* ("purification"), *gharwapsi* ("homecoming") and *paravartan* ("turning around" or "returning" i.e., "re-conversion") campaigns have proliferated among Dalit and tribal communities in modern India.

The "Christian missionary narrative" maintains that numerous state laws as well as High Court and Supreme Court decisions regarding the legality of the conversion process have been unfairly adopted and enforced given India's status as a "secular,

democratic republic" (the designation "secular" was added by amendment to the Indian Constitution in 1976). Several states such as Odisha (1967), Madhya Pradesh (1968), Chhattisgarh (2000), Gujarat (2003), and Himachal Pradesh (2006) have passed *Dharma Swatantra* or "religious freedom" legislation. Other states like Arunachal Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan have similar bills that have not yet been enacted as laws. Such "freedom of religion" legislation forbids the use of "inducement" or "allurement" on the part of missionaries or any other agent "abetting" the conversion process. Odisha's law banning religious inducement curiously forbids "a show of force or a threat of injury of any kind including threat of divine displeasure or social excommunication" and includes that no "grant of any benefit, either pecuniary or otherwise" is allowable. Such restrictions, however, are not applied to "a person who is wishing to 'reconvert' people to their 'original religion' or to the 'religion of one's forefathers'" in the proposed "freedom of religion" bill in Rajasthan (67).

Sahoo sees the adivasi narratives, both of those who convert and of those who do not, as related "points of entry into the much broader discursive" (86). Though referred to in the book as "converts," the adivasi informants interviewed by Sahoo were not "legal converts." That is to say that while respondents in this category had all "taken refuge" in Christ or *Ishu Masih*, they had not followed the formal, state-sanctioned procedure for religious conversion.[3] Like their non-converting counterparts, adivasi converts suffer from "tension-producing, situational factors." A local Bhil pastor interviewed by Sahoo stated "…*log mushibat mein Masih ke pass ate hain* (people visit the church only when they have some problems in their lives)." Non-converting adivasis similarly indicated that they wished to avoid the family and community conflict that comes in the wake of religious conversion. What is seen as a "last resort" for converts (i.e. visiting a church) is seen by those who do not convert as undermining family, community and a cultural "sense of solidarity" (86).

Chapter four continues the work of the previous chapter by focusing on the demographic group from which the vast majority of converts and participants in Pentecostal churches (possibly as high as 70%) are drawn, namely adivasi women. Pentecostal churches have offered tribal women (particularly single, widowed, infertile, abandoned and aged women) a "supportive environment" and respondents

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[3] The official, government-sanctioned procedure for conversion entails several steps. First, the candidate for conversion produces a "free-will affidavit" and is required to meet in-person with the District Magistrate or Collector who inquires whether "force or allurement" has been used. Next, the candidate meets with the Superintendent or Inspector General of Police who makes similar inquiries. The civil procedure may take place only after all parties are satisfied that no inducement has occurred. The candidate's baptism and formal recognition as a Christian may then take place. Curiously, none of Sahoo's "adivasi converts" were, legally speaking, converts. On this point, Sahoo notes that for their part, Christian missionaries downplay the significance of legal conversion due to their concern that converts will lose reservation rights upon converting (74).

report that church attendance has "improved relations" among husbands and wives (113). While sociological studies of the economic impacts of conversion are inconclusive, Sahoo's informants uniformly reported "significant improvement in their socio-economic and material conditions" (114). For Sahoo this helps to explain "why tribal women take a deliberate decision, in spite of knowing the adverse consequences, to 'become believers' of Pentecostalism and 'make a break' with the traditional belief system…" (119).

Chapter five recounts the re-emergence of the Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh ("after its long exile from the Indian political scene for the killing of Mahatma Gandhi"), and other Sangh Parivar organizations to both state and national prominence in contemporary India. Sahoo addresses four related questions in this chapter: (1) why there has been such a dramatic increase in anti-Christian violence since the 1990s; (2) why the violence is predominantly found in BJP-led states; (3) how to explain "increasing religious intolerance in India in general and in BJP-ruled states in particular;" and (4) what role the state has played either to exacerbate or to curtail intolerance and violence. As previously noted, the author conducted fieldwork in Rajasthan, the state with the highest number of riots between 1990 and 2001. According to Sahoo, regular events in Rajasthan now include "intimidation and physical attacks on priests, the burning of the Bible, bans on missionary schools, hospitals and orphanages, rape of nuns and attacks on Christian meetings and congregations…" (123). Sahoo asserts that there is a direct connection between the Sangh Parivar's rise to power at the state and national level in the 1990s (given their "tendency toward moral absolutism" which "inclines them toward intolerance") and the proliferation of anti-Christian violence.[4] In the context of the long debate about religious conversion in India, Hindu nationalists continue to deny the status of adivasis as aboriginals. In the Hindu nationalist narrative, British colonial administrators implementing a divide-and-rule policy introduced the term "adivasi" in the 1935 Government of India Act (144-145). Hindu nationalists have therefore adopted the nomenclature of *Vanvasi* (forest dweller) in place of the term "adivasi" (first dweller). While they live in forests and in villages rather than in cities and with respect to caste-Hindus have a low caste status, vanvasis have always been "Hindus." Never merely a socially or politically neutral head count, the Census of India, from its inception in the colonial period, has classified adivasis as "Hindu" by default. Hindu nationalists thus understand themselves as being pitted against Christian missionaries for the hearts and minds, and political support, of adivasi, tribal and Dalit communities who are in danger of being lured away from their native religious sensibilities.

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[4]One wonders whether such "moral absolutism" and an "inclination toward intolerance" may not also be found among certain Pentecostal traditions.

Sahoo's close and careful attention to the competing claims of various social actors is a praiseworthy feature of his book. However, one potential problem, noted by the author himself, regards the type of responses received while conducting fieldwork in Rajasthan. Converts, introduced to the interviewer by local pastors or by missionaries, might be expected to report only (or primarily) positive results of their conversion experience. However, surely not all of the experiences of the religious converts of Rajasthan have had such happy conclusions. Likewise, one would generally expect that those who do not convert might in fact have negative impressions of religious conversion or of the conversion process. By providing readers with a greater sense of the contrasting views of dissatisfied converts— further ethnographic data from critics of conversion, one-time converts to Pentecostal traditions who were attracted by Hindu "re-conversion" campaigns, for instance—would have advanced the author's stated goal of producing a holistic picture. Including additional contrasting accounts of the conversion experience (from converts, legal or otherwise, who later renounced their conversion) would have provided, if nothing else, a useful point of reference here. Sahoo identifies four "stakeholders" in the religious conversion process in his study. Are there no additional types of stakeholders concerned with conversion? Are "Hindu nationalists" the only example of stakeholders who stand opposed to religious conversion in India?

Pentecostalism and Politics of Conversion in India makes an important contribution toward understanding communal relations in contemporary India. However, Sahoo's study could be beneficially expanded by providing a greater sense of the historical context behind conversion debates in independent India. Attacks against Christians, not only by Hindu nationalists and *deshbhakts*, but also by Hindu rationalists, were prevalent in the 19th century. Mission records are full of the violence faced by Christians, both missionaries and converts alike; some of the strongest descriptions of this violence comes from mission logbooks describing the 1857 riots. Sahoo seeks to understand postcolonial Hindu biases against religious minorities in India. To ensure that his readers avoid falling into the trap that views 1947 and onward as the only nation-building epoch that produced inter-religious conflict, Sahoo could contextualize his study further. There is a longer history of social and political violence against religious minorities before the modern period that could be more fully explained. It is not the case that tensions between religious communities and violence around religious conversion suddenly rose to national prominence only after 1947. Communal attacks, incidents of violence, and bias and discrimination were present in the 19th century, and what Sahoo brilliantly and thought-provokingly describes for the 20th and 21st centuries, has a deep prehistory in the 19th.[5]

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[5] Deepra Dandekar, personal correspondence, 28 April 2019.

Sarbeswar Sahoo has done a fine job of presenting the findings of his fieldwork in southern Rajasthan to a wide audience. That religious conversion is a complex issue in India is surely a truism no longer in need of re-stating; no serious work on the topic today suggests otherwise. By offering a clear analysis of several competing views of conversion in a clearly written, well-organized manner, Sahoo has wisely avoided oversimplifying the matter. Readers interested in the social, political, and economic issues surrounding religious conversion in contemporary India will surely benefit from reading his monograph. Additionally, those who wish to explore such topics as conversion to Christianity in the Global South, the proliferation of anti-Christian violence in India since the 1990s and its connection with Hindu nationalism, and/or the history of Pentecostal traditions in northwest India will find Professor Sahoo's book both interesting and useful.

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Book Review

Dandekar, Deepra. (2019) *The Subhedar's Son. A Narrative of Brahmin-Christian Conversion from Nineteenth-century Mahrashtra.* New York: Oxford University Press. [ISBN 978-0-19091-405-9] Hard Copy. Pages i-xliv+222.

Deepra Dandekar's annotated translation of *The Subhedar's Son*, a novel published in 1895 by the Reverend Dinkar Shankar Sawarkar in Marathi as *Subhedārachā Putra*, is an outstanding contribution to the literature on Hindu conversion to Christianity. The book relates the story of the 1849 conversion of Sawarkar's father, Shankar Nana (1819-1884), a Brahmin Hindu, at the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Nasik in northern Maharashtra. The Reverend Nana was an early Brahmin convert of the CMS and served the mission and the Anglican Church for over four decades as a priest, catechist, evangelist and Marathi teacher. His conversion took place at a key historical moment, when power was being transferred from the Maratha Empire to the British administration, and the novel reveals the profound social, cultural and religious changes taking place in Maharashtra around this time. This is a story of an individual conversion but it provides insight more generally into the journey of a Brahmin to conversion, and the experiences of those who were a product of different faiths, caste, and (Marathi) identity, trying to live a Christian life.

I could not help but approach this review of Dandekar's fascinating and insightful study from a South African perspective as so much of it resonates with research being done on Hindu conversions to Christianity (of the Pentecostal variety) in South Africa. As Pratap Kumar (2016) has pointed out, Hindus who convert to Christianity in South Africa are 'commonly perceived to belong to a lower order of society' who hope that 'conversion would bring them from being lower-caste groups to social equality.' But, Kumar continues, 'no significant change in social identity was visible' and 'a new social identity … did not seem to have come to fruition. Old social disparities continue to plague the local Indian community.' Converts are seen to be of lower class (with remnants of caste consciousness), and are viewed as not only 'poor but also socially inferior.' Convertees are also deemed not to belong to linguistic organisations (Tamil, Telugu, Hindi) which are inherently Hindu.

Though set in the nineteenth century, Dandekar's study has powerful present-day relevance and raises pertinent questions related to conversion, transformation and identity. The broader context for this study is the colonial encounter in South Asia from the eighteenth century, one of the consequences of which was the arrival of Christian missions and conversions to Protestant Christianity (which dominated the religious field amongst Marathi Christianity) (p. vii). The new faith emphasised individual religious faith, as opposed to the communal nature of existing religious practices.

Converts engaged in various forms of 'life-writing', ranging from pamphlets to journal articles and autobiographies, to relate their personal experience of conversion. These have proved an invaluable resource to understand this phenomenon. Many of these publications were written in the vernacular, and were subsequently translated into

European languages by missions and distributed in India and Europe, to demonstrate the "success" of mission work and inspire others to convert. For the locals, the works served a broader purpose. Vernacular Christian literature, as Dandekar points out, was interconnected, as 'vernacular Christian writings borrowed concepts and experiences across biographies and narratives to highlight topical subjects…. They serve to produce a Christian community, the leaders of which became hagiographically inscribed with the help of witnesses' (pp. 18-19).

Dandekar places great store in vernacular life writing. For her, autobiography is 'the only available research method for exploring individual and historical objectives underlying religious transformations and conversation …. It is the only research method that goes to the bone of transformative personal experience' (p. xiv). While there is no doubt that autobiographies and biographies are extremely valuable, they should not be accepted uncritically since such accounts may be psychologically or factually inaccurate, whether by design or accident. This is not to detract from their value but simply to be alert that, like all historical sources, such sources should be used judiciously. Dandekar does acknowledge this. The Reverend Sawarkar was very young when his father died and in Dandekar's analysis, it is likely that he drew from the works of other converts (p. 21). What we have, then, is in part the experience of an individual, but it also reflects the experiences of converts more generally. Dandekar suggests that these life-writings do not aim to 'establish historical veracity or ratify the empiricism of first-generation Christian witnesses…. Their aim instead lay in preserving the role of Christian identity within vernacular religious literature that provided the Christian community with authenticity and a Brahmin and upper caste legacy' (p. 18).

Another important methodological issue raised in this study is what it means to be an insider in terms of writing a critical study. The author of the novel is Dandekar's great grandfather. Dandekar is herself from a convert family, and raises the question of whether she should be writing academically about conversion (p. ix). She points out that 'Personal association with the subject of research' is an issue that 'haunts postcolonial researchers, even though this question has an internal catch. It is obvious that research from without and above cannot replace a history of experience written from within and below; as advocates who are critical of the latter could hardly be supporting the cause of inadequate research' (p. ix). While the study is balanced and Dandekar tries to manage the material in a measured way, at times she does labour the point of the personal pain and injustices suffered by converts when the material that is presented speaks for itself and her strong interventions are not necessary, and perhaps even detract from the original writings. This comprehensive study explores the socio-political context of mid-nineteenth century Maharashtra, and provides summaries of the biographies of both the reverends, as well as the various perspectives framing the book. The story is captivating, in part because of the way in which it is written as a conversation and is filled with romance as well as conflictual family and social relationships as a result of religious and political transformation. The study underscores the difficulties experienced by converts, in this case a first generation upper-caste Hindu. Conversion played an important role in Indian society historically, especially following the arrival of missionaries, as it impacted on caste identity, on the emergence of Hindu nationalism, and the rise of Hindu reformist

groups in the late nineteenth century as they took up the challenge posed by missions. The conversion of Brahmins caused particular angst as they were upper caste and seen to carry the 'sacred' duty of protecting *Sanātan* Dharma and Hinduism. Not surprisingly then, converting to Christianity was viewed as not only a dereliction of this duty and treacherous to the faith, but also as being responsible for causing 'rupture' in the family and community (p. viii).

By and large, convertees faced social exclusion and 'guilt' for rupturing the community, even though the idea of a Brahmin or Marathi community was itself a myth. This story is thus one of 'religious, cultural, literary, nationalist, and genealogical activity—a penumbra constituted by the pain and shame of discrimination and racialization, woven around diverse individual truths resulting from ordinary but transformative individual piety' (p. xiii). The key questions that Dandekar is concerned with, are 'How can Christians be Marathi (how could I be Marathi if I were Christian?) and why did Brahmins need to convert at all if they were really Brahmins?' (p. xiii). Hindus in Maharashtra believed that conversions were not an act of free will but were forced, and were therefore not genuine, a perspective that Dandekar is dismissive of. The conversion of Brahmins presented a special problem since the narrative, as in South Africa, was that only Dalits (outcastes) and the poor converted because they 'gained money and status from the mission and escaped caste oppression.' Upper caste Hindus could not have 'abandoned Hinduism and had nothing to gain from it.' Dandekar argues that this perspective goes against the evidence of voluntary Hindu conversion and is 'disrespectful' of Dalit conversion (p. xiii).

Following an excellent 'Preface', where Dandekar outlines the broader issues surrounding her study, the chapter titled 'Introducing the Novel,' summarises the main themes of Marathi Christian literature during the colonial period, which provide the broader context against which to read *The Subhedar's Son*. This chapter discusses the various forms of vernacular Christian writings that examine things such as gender, feminism, religious conversion, and the anti-colonial potential of Christian piety. As reflected in the writings of the Reverend Dinkar Shankar, higher caste converts were also anti-Muslim, accepting the narrative of colonial historiography (p. xxxvii), and were critical of the lower castes. Race, ethnicity, caste, and the socio-political context of conversion in the nineteenth century are all discussed.

The next chapter discusses 'The Context of *The Subhedar's Son*.' The Reverend Shankar's novel is a typical example of a conversion biography, resembling other works in this genre. It reveals efforts to define separate identities for Brahmin Christians and Hindu Brahmins, the reasons for conversion ('a multiplicity of personal and historical reasons, contextualized within a network of individual social, emotional, religious and intellectual needs' [p. xiv]); and violence against converts. Despite the negative consequences of conversion for convertees, it could be liberating as it offered access to new educational and professional opportunities provided by missions as well through satisfaction in their personal faith (p. 3).

The CMS established its mission just outside Nasik in the early 1830s. This was an extremely conservative town from the Brahmin perspective and potential convertees

faced additional social and economic pressure. The CMS established a separate Christian "village" to house converts, an industrial school, an orphanage, a school for rescued African slaves, and the publishing of vernacular Christian literature. Converts that were excommunicated due to Hindu Brahmin discrimination were given training to equip them for a vocation (p. 6). Through an analysis of these villages and their inhabitants, Dandekar deconstructs Hindu myths about why people converted, making the argument that for most convertees, this was a spiritual journey rather than a material experience. Thus, the argument that conversion was due to material benefits, was 'a source of bitter pain and social ostracism for converts … hatred expressed against converts fed back into notions of Hindu superiority that guised itself as materialist anguish when confronted with individualistic and spiritual expressions of religious freedom that rejected structural benefits as logical motivation' (p. 13).

Dandekar 'interweaves personal and academic inspiration'. She examines this past through the 'lens' of her personal experience as a Brahmin Christian. Conversion produced an 'ethnicised' community (p. 185) but one with negative connotations. It was a 'pejorative concept that expressed ambivalent transformation despite efforts made by converts to reinscribe it as a positive experience…. Conversion became linked with social ostracism' (p. 187). The notion of Brahmin homogeneity is critiqued; Brahmin identities are hyphenated and hybrid. Dandekar also shows that caste is independent of Hinduism, as it applies as much to Christians (and Muslims) as it does to Hindus. 'Reduction of religion to caste,' writes Dandekar, 'reveals the racialization of religion that socially ascribes categories of caste, race, religion to region as a form of politics' (p. 187).

Converts like the Reverend Sawarkar had multiple identities, with Swarkar 'claiming Marathi, Brahmin, and nationalist identity, combined with staunch Christian conviction.' While individual converts may not have experienced internal dissonance, and were in fact comfortable living with overlapping identities, difficulties arose due to 'social discrimination and the application of a racilialized lens to religious identity.' Hindu elites came to see Christians as Europeans and Indians as Hindus. The 'British racialized lens conveniently applied to pre-existing cultural models of caste discrimination and Muslim antipathy, extending the discrimination against Brahmin Christians into a conflation of all antipathy against groups that challenged Hinduism, labelling anti-Hindus as antinational' (p. 187). Sawarkar's novel opposed the undertaking of census' that sought to fit individual people into neat racial and religious categories (p. 187).

Brahmin Christians' attempts to embrace overlapping identities (Marathi, Christian and Brahmin) failed when they were 'besieged by Hindu discrimination.' Their efforts to fit 'multiple identities into customised frameworks led to their fragmentation and polarization on either side of the conversion barrier: either the Hindu side or the Christian side' (p. 188). In this context, conversion was not simply 'a religious act [but] also an almost-lingual mode of expressing intellectual beliefs, ideological dissent, and individual empowerment' (p. 189). Converts tried to juggle various identities at a time of massive historical transformation and one of the ways they did so was through marriage. Christianity 'was lived in the "everyday" along with

Hinduism, which was a residual shadow of the clan's conversion history.' The various conversion narratives suggest that this was 'distressing' to many, but they also 'emphasised the prevalence of an inner Christian piety that produced conversion as nonmomentous, nondramatic, and nonritualistic. Being true Protestants with Christian conviction was internal to the triple-axis identity' (p. 192).

This is a powerful counter to those who insist that conversion in the past and in the present is primarily due to material gain for convertees and ignore issues of faith. With the rise of the Hindu nationalist BJP in India, the threat to convertees to Christianity has intensified. In fact, not too long ago, the BJP MP from Ballia, Bharat Singh, claimed that Christian missionaries were a 'threat to the unity and integrity' of India. This exceptional study makes a valuable contribution to autobiography in nineteenth-century India, as well as social and cultural history and the field of religious studies.

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