

Uncapping the Springs of Localization: Christian Acculturation in South India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, by M. Christhu Doss

Introduction

Identified for its diversified culture and traditions, India witnessed a process of assimilation and synthesis of cultures during the Indian subcontinent's medieval period. Undoubtedly, however, the advent of British colonialism during the seventeenth century profoundly altered Indian life, culture, and polity. Conquering forces undermined Ancient Indian customs and values, and "Hindu" practices¹ were decried as being superstitious. Consequently, the scathing attack on Indian culture and religion generated vehement criticism from English-educated Indian intelligentsia including Ram Mohan Roy, who even claimed that "the British did not want the light of knowledge to dawn on India."²

The expansion of Christianity in India constitutes one of the most remarkable cultural transformations in its social history. Western missionaries in general and Protestant Christians in particular, who operated within and through the colonial enterprise, criticized Hindu religion in a narrow and dogmatic manner in an attempt to prove it "inferior," discrediting it in the minds of the Indian intelligentsia.³ Consequently, scholars view the role of Western missionaries in shaping the nature and course of Christianity in India in more abrogative and adverse terms⁴ as their strategies, which were complex in nature, created tensions and conflicts within indigenous cultures. Christian converts in India very often felt that they were the victims of their cultural background, since missionaries had so much power and control.⁵ As a result, both Hindu and Christian nationalists and liberal-minded intelligentsia attempted to develop counteractive strategies to "Indianize" Christianity. They largely viewed the religion as a "foreign import," although for some, this involved efforts to make the Church more "Hindu" or Sanskritic in its liturgy, hymnody, and architecture.⁶

This paper attempts to look critically into different stages of localization and Christian inculturation in South India.⁷ At the outset, it examines how missionary attitudes towards indigenous masses compelled the newly converted Indian Christians to come out of the missionary fold to establish their own fission model.⁸ It further traces the roots of localization through the ideological discourse promoted by the Indian intelligentsia at the time, namely Indianization.⁹ In this context, terms such as Indigenization or Hinduization, and Westernization etc., are used to explore how counter movements substantially resisted missionary attempts to present the Christian message in an Indian way. Despite the fact that missionary scholars like Robert Eric Frykenberg, Norman Etherington, Geoffrey Oddie, Susan Billington Harper, David Maxwell, Dick Kooiman, and others have argued extensively about Indian Christians' active involvement in the indigenization of Christianity, this study deals largely with the strategies adopted by educated Indian Christians to uncap the springs of acculturation.

Hindu-Christian Model

The socially and economically challenged sections of the South Indian society included: Shanars (later known as Nadars),¹⁰ Paravas,¹¹ and Pariahs,¹² who were treated as "outcastes" and denied ordinary citizens' rights such as the use of public streets, wells,

etc. These groups constituted a notable Christian population when Robert de Nobili¹³ was actively involved in propagating the Christian faith. Despite the fact that the converted Christians were allowed to retain their former social customs and usages, the upper strata of the society identified conversion to the Christian faith with the process of Westernization.¹⁴ As a result, de Nobili adapted a system externally by dressing like a Sannyasin and even openly calling himself a Roman Brahmin¹⁵ with a view to “Indianize” Christianity—e.g. imitating Brahmins by wearing ochre robes and wooden sandals, taking vegetarian food, constructing chapels in Indian or Hindu style, and replacing Anglican usages with Sanskrit including “Kovil” for the place of worship, “Arul” and “Prasadam” for grace, “Guru” for priest, “Vedam” for Bible and “Poosai” for mass to communicate his message to Tamil audience. He thus set a precedent for the process of “Indigenization” in India during later periods.¹⁶

It was the Western missionaries who initiated studies on culture, society, and religions of the indigenous masses¹⁷ to assess the situation in many parts of South India. They observed that the people were “neglected for ages,” which in turn made them pathetic in terms of socio-economic conditions.¹⁸ Missionaries were of the opinion that Nadars, with some exceptions, were slaves of the dominant castes.¹⁹ Robert Caldwell,²⁰ a missionary-cum-Bishop in Tirunelveli²¹ of South India, described the Nadars as: “Belonging to the highest division of the lowest classes or the lowest of the middle classes.”²² Similarly, H. R. Pate described the Nadars as a caste group, “inferior” to other “privileged” sections of the society. Subsequently, Kearns, a missionary scholar, opined: “Nadars are among the worst types of the human family.”²³

Studies made by Western missionaries on Nadars over a period of time attracted open criticism from the lettered masses,²⁴ who in turn made attempts to translate their studies into vernacular and also undertook initiatives to distribute translated copies to their fellow community members both in South India and abroad to make them understand what they believed to be the misrepresentation of their community by missionaries’ works. They further alleged that in most of the missionary periodicals,²⁵ emphasis was placed on European culture, civilization, morality, and so on.

Furthermore, the master-servant relationship between missionaries and the Indian Christians widened the gulf between these two races further than ever before, while the relationship between missionaries and the empire became increasingly cordial.²⁶ The effects of Western dominance were therefore felt not only in the political sphere but also in the wider religious sphere. Converts, who closely observed the activities of missionaries, were targeted for allegedly having anti-white sentiments.²⁷ Over a period of time, a group of Christians in Tirunelveli made an attempt to disassociate themselves from missionary organizations, as they felt that the white men used the Bible only to rule them.²⁸ The Nadars, who were identified as inferior, began to question the paternalistic domination and guiding control²⁹ of the missionaries and even claimed that the sincere milk of the work of the Lord was adulterated by the poison of impure European traditions.³⁰

When the Western missionaries felt that their superficial knowledge of the vernaculars and artificial sympathy³¹ for the converts partially disconnected themselves socially, they began to utilize the colonial connection and wrote letters to the sub-collector of Tirunelveli. As a result, warrants were issued for the arrest of local Christians including Sattampillai, also known as Arumainayagam, who in reaction to Western missionaries’ domination established his own church called *Hindu Church of Lord Jesus*

in 1857 on the model of Jewish temples. He even started calling himself a rabbi and emphasized mainly Old Testament principles and doctrines.³² Despite the argument that “zeal for caste” and “Hindu sentiments” were the prime forces for the establishment of his church,³³ the way in which Sattampillai and his associates drew parallels between the Jewish customs and ancient Hindu traditions, incorporating a number of local Hindu customs into the church, totally rejected Western Christianity as “inauthentic.”³⁴ In fact, the Hindu Church of Lord Jesus had crucial implications on the nature and course of the foreign missions in South India largely due to Sattampillai’s equal faith in both Hindu and Christian religions. He even rejected everything that appeared to him to savor of a European origin, with a view to make a fusion model of Hindu-Christian religion without any assistance from “white” European missionaries.³⁵ Subsequently, the socio-religious reform movements, writings on issues like church autonomy and ‘Churchianity’ by educated Indian Christians, and the growing Indian nationalism, centered largely around Bengal, began to undermine the attempts to Westernize Christianity³⁶ through multifarious strategies.

Discourse of De-Westernization

When the missionaries felt that there was a growing anti-European syndrome among the Indian Christians, emphasis on training local converts became inevitable.³⁷ Missionaries even admitted that no English or European missionary would individually take the task of propagating Christianity without the help of local converts. During this period, a range of debates took place in India on the so-called Indianization of Churches in an attempt to free the Indian churches from the growing influence of Western theology. In most of the churches established by Indian Christians, the use of vernacular languages for liturgy, the employment of local musical traditions, and adaptations of Indian architectural patterns in the building of churches became the order of the day.³⁸ As a result, missionaries slowly and steadily started withdrawing themselves voluntarily from many of the mission stations in South India—partly due to the compulsion of Indian Christians to develop their own material resources to promote the indigenous church, and partly because of the growing anti-Western theological sentiments that Indian theology was superior to the Western counterpart.³⁹

The last decade of the nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth centuries marked a distinct change in theological discourse in India. The growing Indian national movement in Bengal, which later came to be called the “Bengal storm”⁴⁰ by Stephen Neill, made an indelible mark on the intelligentsia of Indian Christianity. For many of the leaders of socio-religious movements, Christianity was closely linked with imperialism, which later resulted in the revival and reassertion of Hinduism in conscious opposition to Christianity.⁴¹ Nevertheless, a number of educated Christians, both Indian and foreign theologians including Kali Charan Banerjee, Sathianadhan, K. T. Paul, Vedanayagam Samuel Azariah, Whitehead, C.F. Andrews, Appasamy, Chenchiah, and Vengal Chakkarai, became critical not only of the British raj but of the Western captivity of the Indian church at large.⁴²

Notions that “the spread of more effective Western techniques and the extension of a more dynamic Western culture are often accepted as inevitable and self-evident” and “supervision and control of the local pastors by Englishmen was a necessity” were vehemently criticized by the educated Indian Christians, for they felt that the statements reflected deeply embedded Euro-centric perspectives, providing no scope for indigenous Christianity in India.⁴³ Many times, Western missionaries faced objections not only from

people belonging to non-Christian faiths but also from Christians at large.⁴⁴ According to the local Christians, this opposition was partly due to Western missions' suspected attitude and behavior towards native missionaries, "lack of openness, absence of devolution of responsibility, and above all their 'spiritual or cultural hegemony.'"⁴⁵ While a large chunk of Christians were prepared to continue in a predominantly Western tradition of church organization, a small but vibrant educated Christian population was constantly insisting on the significance of Indian national and cultural traditions and their relevance to Indian Christianity. Discourses about 'Indian-ness' and 'nationalism' became a visible sign in the day-to-day activities of nationalist sentiments amongst Indian Christians, which later resulted in the formation of organizations like Indian Missionary Society and National Missionary Society in 1903 and 1905 respectively.⁴⁶

During this time, a few liberal Western Bishops "imagined" themselves as true champions of the Indianization of Christianity.⁴⁷ V.S. Azariah, a close associate of the then-Madras Bishop,⁴⁸ had been asked by John Mott, the chairman of World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh to give an address on *The problem of Co-operation Between Foreign and Native Workers in the Younger Churches*.⁴⁹ In his address, he underlined the "true relationship" of foreign missionaries in the following lines:

I do not plead for returning calls, handshakes, chairs, dinners and teas as such. I do plead you [foreign missionaries] to show that you are in the midst of the people to be to them not a Lord and master but a brother and friend. Through all the ages to come the Indian Church will rise up in gratitude to attest the heroism and self-denying labors of the missionary body. You have given your goods to feed the poor; you have given your bodies to be burnt. We ask also for love. Give us friends.⁵⁰

This speech had crucial historic implications on the course of the foreign missionaries in India and abroad. Subsequently, Western missionaries undertook initiatives to solve the ongoing 'cold war' between these two races. Indian Christians, as a result, had proved themselves to be partially successful when they acquired V.S. Azariah as their first Indian Bishop in 1912 at Dornakal in the then Madras Presidency.⁵¹ Yet bishops who were in favor of British leadership were extremely "doubtful" of his leadership, and the English missionaries were "horrified" and even wrote letters to the Madras Bishop that they were not willing to work under an Indian bishop.⁵²

After his consecration, the focus of attention revolved largely around the Indianization of Christianity in one way or the other. One of Azariah's objectives was that the faith must be presented in terms and worship conducted in a manner most natural and intelligible to the people of India. He iterated that worship in Western forms was foreign and strange to the Indians. In fact, he encouraged the use of Indian customs and tunes in the church. Emphasis on local methods of offering to God, harvest festivals, notion of first fruits, a remarkable example of the adaptation of Indian art to Christian worship in Dornakal Cathedral, and so on helped to ground worship in local values.⁵³ Although missionary scholar Susan Billington Harper argues that the church indigenization was the product of the Western Orientalist rather than indigenous impulses, the way in which Azariah rejected Western missionaries' suggestion to replace his bishop's miter with a turban disproved the popular Oriental imagination, showing his continued confrontations with Western missionaries with regard to the Indigenization process.⁵⁴ Despite the fact that the continued demand for a "truly Indian Church" can be traced back to the last decades of the nineteenth century, which the Christian Press

carried with huge coverage,⁵⁵ Azariah could raise his voice wholeheartedly in favor of indigenization only after acquiring the “power chair” of bishop.⁵⁶

Nonetheless, the concept of inculturation remained too theoretical for the newly converted, inexperienced Indian evangelists. In fact, it did not attract a great deal of attention from the grassroots level Christians, as they had been accustomed predominantly to the Anglican model of worship for a considerable period of time. The way in which Azariah used strategies to indigenize Christianity so as to undermine the growing influence of Western practices in Indian Christianity influenced a sizable Christian population, but the notion of Christian inculturation through theological discourse remained untouched in South India.⁵⁷

“Cleansing stagnant Western waters” and indigenization in the making

Protestant Christian attempts to indigenize Christianity over course of time deeply impacted on their Catholic counterparts. When a group of nationalist leaders who associated themselves with the Indian National Congress felt that “Christianity in India was full of stagnant Western waters and could be cleansed only through Indian Christian literature,”⁵⁸ the tensions and conflicts between these two races came to “most explicit expression.”⁵⁹ Establishment of non-denominational missionary organizations by both Indian and liberal Western Christians challenged the Western theology through Indocentric perspectives. Kali Charan Banerjee, who joined the Indian National Congress in 1885, set up a non-denominational Christian organization called Christo Samaj in 1887. He wore the clothes of a Sannyasin, a conscious hearkening back to Robert de Nobili and his policy of inculturation. His association with Scottish missionaries in Bengal made a tremendous impression on the Scottish missionaries in Madras, especially Madras Christian College, the then-epicenter of the Re-thinking Christianity in India Group.⁶⁰ Consequently, de Nobili model of inculturation began to influence Indian theological discourse, leaving space for the Madras School of Theologians to initiate their own inculturation model called “Re-thinking Christianity in India Group.”⁶¹

The Re-thinking Group, based at Madras Christian College, felt that the missionary emphasis on institutions like “church” in India was not at all wise and reiterated that Christianity must understand the spiritual genius of India, methods of work, forms of worship, and categories of thought so as to take root in the Indian soil.⁶² As a result, development of spirituality through the Bhakti tradition—i.e. loving surrender to God,⁶³ “raw fact of Christ,”⁶⁴ (experience of Christ that Hindus could share with Christians), and inculturation of the Christian faith through the notion of *avatar*⁶⁵ (incarnation of a deity on the earth)—became the order of the day. However, the Re-thinking Group’s attempt to develop distinctive Indian theologies, with a view to make use of the rich diversity of forms and modes of thought of “Hindu” philosophies, could attract only a particular section of the Christian community. Similarly, nationalists including Gandhi gave an open call to the Christian intelligentsia to reform the institutionalized church for allegedly having impurities and its denial of salvation to all who were not considered Christians.⁶⁶

It was during this period that initiatives were made to localize Christianity using a fusion model called the ashram strategy. The very idea of establishing an ashram—a small community of faithful people living a life of the greatest simplicity as disciples of a guru—for Christians, became a reality only after Gandhi made a speech on the concept of ashram in a conference in Madras Christian College in 1915.⁶⁷ The proponents, who were

attracted largely by the ancient Hindu idea of ashram, criticized the institution of church in the public domain for allegedly having quarrels, hierarchy, ritual, and fixed dogmas and concluded that the church was interested more in administration than Christian life.⁶⁸ As a result, the first Christian ashram, called Cristukula Ashram⁶⁹ and founded by both a foreign missionary⁷⁰ and an Indian named S. Jesudasan⁷¹ in 1921 in Tamil Nadu, continued the task of making distinctively Indian forms of Christianity. Interestingly, Gandhi was invited to this ashram and appreciated its remarkable endorsement of another religious ethos. The Cristukula Ashram aimed largely at establishing new and vital forms of Christian community to align with the ancient Hindu idea of the ashram. The founders of the ashram in their book *Ashram Past and Present*⁷² argue that the Christianity should keep itself free from hierarchical institutions like church, with a view to attract more Hindus to the Christian ashram. They even identified themselves Hindu-Christians, emphasizing only “spiritual” matters.⁷³

The Cristukula Ashram applied remarkable strategies towards Christian inculturation in South India, which included re-thinking everything in the light of theology through mysticism to suit the Indian context.⁷⁴ Attempting to understand how Christianity was related to Indian thought and became a “living force” in the country, Indian theologians were inclined to think that it would place great emphasis on mystical experience.⁷⁵ As a pursuit of achieving communion, mysticism was identified with “conscious awareness of ultimate reality, the divinity, the spiritual truth, or God through direct experience, intuition, or insight.”⁷⁶ Interestingly, Western missionaries who came to India to “give” the Hindus Christ acknowledged that they “discovered” Christ more deeply through Hindu mysticism and admitted that India plunged them more vigorously into Christ’s mystery than anything from their Christian backgrounds.⁷⁷ It was in this context that Indian Christian theologians viewed Bhakti mysticism as a bridge of understanding between Hinduism and Christianity,⁷⁸ for they felt that of all Hindu religious experience, Bhakti mysticism was the nearest to Christian mystical experience.⁷⁹

The so-called Hindu-Christian theologians in India attempted to situate the writings of the New Testament within the discourse of Hinduism. Similarly, some of the missionaries from both Protestant and Catholic denominations, who preached Christianity in the South India, mastered Sanskrit in order to convert the local masses and to be in tune with the prevailing conditions. They handled a volume of Sanskrit words in preference to vernacular languages to widen the scope of inter-religious dialogue.⁸⁰ They proclaimed that: “If St. John had been writing his Gospel in India, he would have used the term ‘Om’ in place of Logos...In our ashram every morning we reverently say together ‘Om, shanty, shanty, shanty. We lose something very precious in our spiritual Indian heritage by a needless foolish fear of syncretism.”⁸¹ As a result, the belief that the knowledge of God and of truth can be attained through spiritual insight and independently of reason was propagated more widely by Indian theologians than ever before, whereby monasticism flourished in India, reaching the highest mark of mysticism in the last decades of the twentieth century.⁸² Attempting to localize Christianity, Indian Christian intelligentsia functioned as a bridge between Indian monastic traditions and Christian spirituality with a view to “Hinduize” Christianity by incarnating it into India’s culture, way of life, prayer, contemplation, and liturgy.⁸³

Concluding Remarks

Although emerging largely through obscurantist operations, the Indian Christian intelligentsia made persistent and prolific endeavors against the complex motives of Western missionaries and the notions of Westernization through a range of localization initiatives⁸⁴ that challenged the Western missionaries' Euro-centric approach. The Christian inculturation, an ecclesiological revolution intended to develop inter-religious dialogues in South India, remains an unfinished and partial success. The Hindu-Christian fusion model of indigenization further opened up public spaces, whereby new forms of Christianity began to emerge to the tune of cultural heritages that were deeply embedded in the Indian subcontinent.

The way in which European missionaries looked at Indian Christians—"weak" and "ignorant" for clinging to "old habits...heathen rules...and superstitions"—was judged unacceptable to Indian Christian intellectuals. As a result, the contest against the foreign missionary dominance compelled the Indian Christians to make efforts to contain Christianity in an indigenous framework so as to identify Western Christianity as a mixture of gospel, politics, power, and European customs. Although it is argued that it was not Indian Christians who formulated indigenous interpretations of Christianity, but the Brahmo Samaj, founded by Ram Mohan Roy, it should be noted here that the pioneers of localization included individuals like Sattampillai, who constructed for the first time the notion of "Indian" forms of Christianity, advocating a "Hindu" way of prostrating before the deity, the use of frankincense, sitting on the floor, and worshipping God with folded hands.⁸⁵

With the tremendous increase of Western missionaries in South India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Christianity was too easily identified as a foreign religion. It was in this scenario that V.S. Azariah, members of Madras Rethinking Group, and others who favored inculturation got their inspiration largely from the simultaneously growing Indian nationalism. In fact, they had taken up the task of initiating an "Indian" Christian theology for the development of indigenous understandings of Christ and Christianity in India.⁸⁶ Furthermore, initiatives made by Indian Christian theologians eventually opened up new avenues whereby the Christian message was conveyed to a "Hindu" middle class through indigenous philosophies. K. P. Aleaz, an Indian scholar on theology, argues: "The life and work of Jesus manifest Brahman, the Supreme Self, as the pure consciousness, reveals the all-pervasive power, and proclaims the liberative, illuminative, and unifying power."⁸⁷

Expounding the meanings of Western Christian theology with special reference to its Sanskrit roots, the ashram model made further attempts to accelerate the process of indigenization. Breaking new grounds for Hindu-Christian dialogue, the establishment of Christian ashrams as adaptations of an Indian institution played a crucial role for inter-religious centers. Considered largely as products of pro-Indian culture and spiritual traditions, these ashrams increased membership in "Hinduized" Christianity, because for a large number of Hindus the hierarchy-oriented church was seen as a barrier to interest in Christianity.⁸⁸ It is in this context that the idea of uncapping the springs of localization can be understood not in terms of keeping Christian theological interpretations national or international but expressing the "universal character" of Christianity in terms understandable to every family, caste, region, and nation.⁸⁹ The conscious process of Christian acculturation in South India therefore sowed the seeds for Hindu-Christian inclusivism by accommodating Hindu philosophies, leaving the scope for new forms of

Christianity and inter-religious dialogue alive.

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- ¹ The word "Hindu" is derived from the word "Sindhu," the name for the Indus River. The name Sindhu further became "Hind" or "Hindu" in Persian languages and later re-entered Indian languages as "Hindu," originally with the sense of the inhabitants of the lands near the east of the Indus River. Although it is argued that the term "Hindu" identified anything native to India, whether people, custom, and religious traditions, it was not common before the British Raj came into being. Similarly, colonialism, Orientalists, and Christian missionaries had located the core of Indian religiosity in Sanskrit texts with a dual objective: textualization and interpretation of religious beliefs and practices. Consequently, conceptualized by Western Orientalists, according to their own pre-suppositions about the nature of religion, the construction of Hinduism as a single religion is conceived of in terms of Western conceptions of religion. See David N Lorenzen, *Who Invented Hinduism* (Yoda Press, 2006), 7-8; Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Christianity in India: from beginnings to the present* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 268; Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Post-Colonial Theory, India and "The Mystic East"* (Routledge, 2002), 101-111.
- ² Sarkar Ghose, *Indian National Congress: Its History and Heritage* (New Delhi: All India Congress Committee, 1975), 18-44. Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 153. Hira Singh, *Colonial Hegemony and Popular Resistance: Princes, Peasants, and Paramount Power*, Sage Publications (New Delhi, 1998), 35; Ram Gopal, *Hindu culture during and after Muslim rule: Survival and subsequent challenges* (M. D. Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1994), 69.
- ³ Norman Etherington, "Introduction," in Norman Etherington (ed.), *Missions and Empire* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3-4; Robert Eric Frykenberg, "Christian Missions and the Raj," in Norman Etherington (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 107-131; D. Dennis Hudson, *Protestant Origins in India: Tamil Evangelical Christians 1706-1835* (U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 186-187; Brijraj Singh, *The First Protestant Missionary to India Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg, 1683-1719* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 120-121; S. A. Abbasi, *Thinkers of Indian Renaissance* (New Age International, 1998), 170.
- ⁴ Susan Billington Harper, "The Dornakal Church on the cultural Frontier" in *Christians, Cultural Interaction and India's Religious Traditions*, ed. Judith M. Brown and Robert Eric Frykenberg, (London: Routledge, 2002).
- ⁵ Geoffrey A. Oddie, "India: Missionaries, Conversion and Change," in *The Church Missionary Society and World Christianity 1799-1999*, ed. Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley, (U. K.: Curzon Press Ltd., 2000), pp. 252-254; Kavita Philip, *Civilizing Natures: race, resources and modernity in colonial south India* (Orient Blackswan, 2004), 212.
- ⁶ M. K. Gandhi, *Christian Missions: Their Place in India* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1941), 123-126, 160, 259; Hugh Mcleod, *World Christians, 1914-2000* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 427.
- ⁷ Paul M. Collins, *Christian Inculturation in India* (Bushington, USA: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007), 80-81.

- ⁸ M. S. S. Pandian, "Nation as Nostalgia: Ambiguous Spiritual Journeys of Vengal Chakkarai," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No. 51/52, Dec. 27, 2003-Jan 2, 2004, pp. 5357-5365; Vincent Kumaradass, "Creation of Alternative Public Spheres and Church Indigenization in 19th Century Colonial Tamil Nadu: The Hindu Church of Lord Jesus and the National Christians of India," in Roger E. Hedlund, *Christianity is Indian: The Emergence of Indigenous Community* (New Delhi: Mylapore for I.S.P.C.K., 2000), 3-21.
- ⁹ Antony Copley, *Religions in Conflict: Ideology, Cultural Contact and Conversion in Late Colonial India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997); Helen Ralston, *Christian Ashrams: A New Religious Movement in India* (Edwin Miller Press, 1987); A.J. Appasamy, *Sundersingh: A Biography* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), 102-103; Jan Peter Schouten, *Jesus as Guru: The Image of Christ among Hindus and Christians in India* (Rodopi, 2008); T. E. Slater, *The Attitude of Educated Hindus*, August 1858, Stephen Neill Study and Research Archives; Duncan B. Forrester, *Forrester on Christian Ethics and Practical Theology: Collected Writings on Christianity, India and the Social Order*, (England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2010); Stephen Neill, *Christianity in India 1707-1858* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 364-368; S. M. Pathak, *American Missions and Hinduism*, (New Delhi: Munshiram and Mahoharlal, 1967), 131-132.
- ¹⁰ *Madras Church Missionary Record*, vol. XXVII, no. 5, May, 1860, p. 122.
- ¹¹ Also called Parathavar, Bharathar, and Bharatakula Khastriyar are a Tamil fishing community. Portuguese expressed their willingness to help to those who embrace Christian faith. St. Francis Xavier was one of the Portuguese missionaries who closely associated with the community.
- ¹² Eddy Asirvatham, "Changing India and the Missionary," *The Harvest Field*, 1920, 409; Robert Hardgrave, *The Nadars of Tamilnad* (University of California Press, 1969).
- ¹³ Robert de Nobili (1577-1656), an Italian Jesuit missionary who came to South India in 1542.
- ¹⁴ Rowena Robinson, *Christians of India* (Sage Publications, 2003), 29.
- ¹⁵ Jayaseela Stephen, *Caste, Catholic Christianity and the Language of Conversion* (Gyan Publishing House, 2008), 100.
- ¹⁶ John F. Butler, *Iconography of Religions: Christianity in Asia and America* (Brill, 1979), 7; M. G. Chitkara, *Hindutva*, (APH Publishing, 1997), 140.
- ¹⁷ Robert Caldwell's works like *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages*, (Madras, 1856), *A Political and General History of Tinnevely in the Presidency of Madras from the Earliest period to its cession to the English Government in A.D. 1801* (Madras Government Press, 1881), *The Tinnevely Shanars: A Sketch of their Religion, and their Moral Condition and Characteristics, as a Caste* (Madras: Christian Knowledge Society Press, 1849) and Benjamin Schultze's *Notices of Madras and Cuddalore* (Longman and co., 1858) played a crucial role.
- ¹⁸ *Madras Church Missionary Record*, vol. 1, no. 9, December, 1830, 268.
- ¹⁹ *Madras Church Missionary Record*, vol. V, no. 5, May, 1838, 91.
- ²⁰ Robert Caldwell was the first to use the word 'Dravidian' instead of the term 'Tamilian' in his first and longest work entitled "A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages," originally published in 1856. He was the standard authority on the subject without rival or successor. See J. L. Wyatt, *Reminiscences of Caldwell* (Madras: Addison and Co., 1894), 150-151, 192. Also see Robert Caldwell, *The Tinnevely Shanars: A Sketch of their Religion, and their Moral Condition and Characteristics, as a Caste* (Madras: Christian Knowledge Society

Press, 1849); Hardgrave, L. *The Nadars of Tamil Nadu: The Political Culture of a Community in Change* (University of California, 1969), 57.

- ²¹ He was a missionary of the Society for the Propagation of Gospel and became Bishop of Tirunelveli Diocese later in the year 1878.
- ²² Robert Caldwell, *The Tinnevelly Shanars*, 1st edition, Madras, 1849, 4-5.
- ²³ J. F. Kearns, *Mudalur Mission Report*, 1824, Society for the Propagation of Gospel, 1824.
- ²⁴ Caldwell's remarks on Nadars over a period of time invited criticism through the following works: H. Martin Winfred, *Shandrar Marapu* (Madras: Shandrar Customs, 1871); Sargunar, *Bishop Caldwell and Tinnevelly Shanars* (Palamcottah, 1883); A. N. Aiya Sattampillai, Aiya, *The Chantror Memorial* (Madras Golden Stream Press, 1911); S. Winfred, *Shandrar Kula Marapu Kattala* (Safeguarding the customs of the Shandrar Community) (Madras, 1874) and so on.
- ²⁵ It was through the missionary societies that the Tamil journals were first published. A monthly journal *Tamil News Paper* (1831) was published by the Madras Religious Tracts' Society. *Evangelical Explanation* (1840) and *Good Teachings* (1840) came out every month from Nagercoil and Palayamkottai respectively. *People's Friend* (1841) was published bi-monthly from Madras. In 1847 *Dravida Deepigai* came out. *Morning Star* (1841) was a monthly published by American Mission at Jaffna. Neyoor Mission Society published the *Country's Helper* (1861) with illustrations. *Children's Friend* (1849) and *Young One's Friend* (1859) were the children's magazines published from Palayamkottai and Jaffna respectively. *Bala Deepigai* (1852) was a quarterly from Nagercoil. In 1863, a Tamil monthly named *Arunodhayam* was started by the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Missions. Quoted in M. Christhu Doss, *Protestant Missionaries and Depressed Classes in Southern Tamil Nadu 1813-1947* (Un-published Ph. D., Thesis), Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 2010, 166-167. Also see D. I. Jesu Doss, *Tamil through the Tranquebar Mission*, Christian Sishya Sanga Publication, Coimbatore, 1939, 2-8.
- ²⁶ S. Sathianadhan, "Missionary Work in India," *The Harvest Field* (Madras: Addison and Co., September, 1877), 190-191.
- ²⁷ Stephen Neill, *op. cit.*, 232-233. Arumainayagam alias Sattampillai (1823-1918), known for his intellectual caliber, worked in a missionary school and closely associated himself with missionaries. He was dismissed for allegedly having remarked on foreign missionaries.
- ²⁸ Joseph Mullen, *A Brief Review of Ten Years' Missionary Labor in India Between 1852 and 1861* (London, 1863), 50-51. Also see Robert Hardgrave, *op. cit.*, 76.
- ²⁹ *Madras Church Missionary Record*, July and August, Madras, 1876, 240-242; *Madras Church Missionary Record*, November, 1877, Madras, 361-363. Also see Vincent Kumaradass, *op. cit.*, 3-21.
- ³⁰ Quoted in M. S. S. Pandian, *op. cit.*, 5357-5365. Also see Vincent Kumaradass, *op. cit.*
- ³¹ S. Sathianadhan, *op. cit.*, 190-191.
- ³² It is called by three different names: *Nattu Sabai* (country church) or Sattampillai *Sabai* (Sattampillai church) or *Eka Ratchakar Sabai* (Savior's church) by local people. It has its branches at seven places in Tamil Nadu. The worship usually held in every Saturday (Sabbath day). People belong to this church don't work on this day. Even food for Saturday is made before 6 p.m. on Friday. When other Anglican churches use bell, this section of the people blow up the trumpet. They use Jewish calendar to celebrate feast days as followed in Old Testament days. Presently Hindu Christian Church of Lord Jesus has seven places. They are: 1. Mukuperi (near Nazareth), also known as *Thai* (mother) *sabai*. 2. Oyyankudiyiruppu. 3. Kulathukudiyiruppu 4. Salaiputhur. 5.

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- Coimbatore 6. Chrompet, Chennai. 7. Chinnalapatti. See Vincent Kumaradass, *op. cit.*, 2-7; Stephen Neill, *op. cit.*, 233.
- 33 Joseph Mullens, *A Brief Labor of Ten Years' Missionary Labor in India between 1852 and 1861* (London, 1863), 51-52.
- 34 Roger E. Hedlund, *Christianity is Indian: the Emergence of an Indigenous Community*, Mylapore Institute for Indigenous Studies, Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2000, 8-9.
- 35 Robert Caldwell, *The Nadars of Tamilnad*, *op. cit.*, 76-77.
- 36 David Stuart, "As Others See," *The Harvest Field* (Madras: Addison and Co., August 1887), 44. Also see T. Walker, "The Tinnevely Mission: Church Missionary Society," *The Harvest Field*, October 1892, 128 and William Simpson, "Mandalay and the Pagodas," *The Harvest Field*, April 1886, Madras, 320.
- 37 W. Goudie, "Training and Supervision of Native Agents," *The Harvest Field*, September 1887, Madras, 194.
- 38 Sebastian C. H. Kim, *Christian Theology in Asia* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 174.
- 39 *Madras Church Missionary Record*, July and August 1876, 240-242.
- 40 Stephen Neill in his work argues that Bengal was the area in which the cultural shock was most acutely felt and in which the tensions and conflicts between East and West came to most explicit expression. Bengal as the epicenter of the Indian nationalism was rapidly becoming one of the capitals of the world where every aspect of life was discusses and debated. Stephen Neill, *Christianity in India 1707-1858*, *op. cit.*, 364-368.
- 41 Stephen Neill, *op. cit.*, 364-368.
- 42 Robin Boyd, *op. cit.*, 86-87. The theologians had been intensively involved in a new Indian approach to the Christian faith and wanted to experience their faith in Christ in terms of their Hindu background.
- 43 Carol Graham, *op. cit.*, 7
- 44 Missionaries, sometimes making friendship with influential converts, used to preach the Christian faith in front of Hindu temples and other public places with unhealthy intentions and motives, hurting the feelings and sentiments of the people of other faiths. This attitude of missionaries towards other faiths directly and indirectly induced and instigated communal tension between faiths. A missionary from Church Missionary Society shares his experience in the following lines: "The opening words give the whole tone to the preaching, and as my companion read on 'you must not worship Brahma-you must not worship Vishnu-you must not worship Vishnu-all this is sin.'" See *Madras Church Missionary Record*, October-December 1875, 310-311. Also see Clifford Manshardt, *Christianity in a Changing India*, (Bombay, 1932), 20-21. The administration of the church was alleged by the Indian Christians as autocratic. They even claimed: "Bishops are acting not only as paternal government but they held all the rein of power in their own hand. The executive councils are consulted but they preserve the right of veto. Thus the one power, the Bishop has all the authority and all the power." T, Walker, *op. cit.*, 128.
- 45 V.S. Azariah, *India and Christian Movement*, 1934, 63-64.
- 46 *Ibid.* Also see Robin Boyd, *op. cit.*, 87-89.

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- 47 Susan Billington Harper, *op. cit.*, 95.
- 48 Henry Whitehead (1853-1947).
- 49 Carol Graham, *op. cit.*, 38-41.
- 50 *Ibid.*
- 51 Susan Billington Harper, “The Dornakal Church on the Cultural Frontier,” *Christians, Cultural Interactions and India’s Religious Traditions*, ed. Judith M. Brown and Robert Eric Frykenberg, (London: Routledge, 2002), 183-210.
- 52 J.A. Sharrock, *op. cit.*, 279-281.
- 53 Carol Graham, *op. cit.*, 7.
- 54 Susan Billington Harper, “The Significance of Episcopal Extension for Church-State Relations in British India” in *Religion and Public Culture: Encounters and Identities in Modern South India*, ed. John Jeya Paul and Keith E. Yandell (Routledge, 2000), 79.
- 55 *Christian Patriot*, Madras, 16 June 1898.
- 56 M. Christhu Doss, “Contextualizing Missionary Engagement: Transition from Christianization of Indianization of Christianity in Colonial South India—Edinburgh Conference and After,” in *Edinburgh 1910 Revisited: Give Us Friends- An India Perspective of One Hundreds of Mission*, ed. Frampton F. Fox (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010), 8-9.
- 57 Duncan B. Forrester, *op. cit.*, 86-87.
- 58 Suresh K. Sharma, *Cultural and Religious Heritage of India: Christianity*, 205-206.
- 59 Stephen Neill, *op. cit.*, 364-368.
- 60 Antony Copley, *op. cit.*, 214-216.
- 61 Thoughtful Christians including Appasamy (1891-1975), Chenchiah (1886-1959) and Vengal Chakkarai (1880-1958) in Madras started an organization called Christo Samaj in 1918 based on the mode which was set up in Bengal in 1887 by K.C. Banerjee. The founders were ‘deeply dissatisfied’ with the work which the missionaries were doing. *The Bengal Christian Herald* (later changed to *The Indian Christian Herald*) a newspaper, started by K.C. Banerjee, became the focal point, whereby a weekly journal named *The Christian Patriot* started publishing articles which were considered ‘nationalistic’ in content. The ‘Rethinking Group’ also formed the Indian Christian Book Club which later published its magnum opus *Rethinking Christianity in India*, with special reference to indigenous Christianity. Duncan B. Forrester, *op. cit.*, 86-87.
- 62 A.J. Appasamy, *op. cit.*, 102-103.
- 63 Appasamy focused largely on the development of spirituality through Bhakti tradition—‘Loving surrender to God.’ Jan Peter Schounten, *Jesus as Guru: The Image of Christ among Hindus and Christians in India* (Rodopi, 2008), 117-118.
- 64 Chenchiah, the most radical of the three, concerned mostly as the experience of Christ that Hindus could share with Christians otherwise known as ‘raw fact of Christ.’ *Ibid.*

- ⁶⁵ Vengal Chakkarai Chetti represented Indian Christian community of Madras at the time when Gandhi delivered a talk in Madras on 26 April 1915. His contribution to Indian theology could be considered entirely Indian, and thus Hindu concepts influenced both Christians and people with Hindu backgrounds. He was in favor of inculturation of the Christian faith, which he called the 'Indianization of Christianity' in his thought provoking work *Jesus the Avatar*, published in 1926. *Ibid. The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1961, Vol. 14, 421.
- ⁶⁶ M. K. Gandhi, *op. cit.*, 123-126, 160.
- ⁶⁷ *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 14, 405. Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1961. Also see Paul M. Collins, *op. cit.*, 80-81.
- ⁶⁸ Robin Boyd, *op. cit.*, 160-161.
- ⁶⁹ Also known as the family ashram of Christians. Savarirayan Jesudasan and Ernest Forrester Paton, ed., *The Christukula Ashram: Family of Christian Ashram at Tirupattur* (N.M.S. Press, 1940).
- ⁷⁰ Ernest Forrester Paton. K.R. Sundararajan and Bithika Mukherjee, ed., *Hindu Spirituality, Post Classical and Modern* (Motilal Banarsidass Publication, 2003), 523-524.
- ⁷¹ Harry Oldmeadow, *Journey's East: Twentieth Century Western Encounters with Eastern Religious Traditions* (World Wisdom Inc., 2004), 234-236.
- ⁷² Published in 1941 and focused entirely on the notion of a religion less Christian.
- ⁷³ Zoe C. Sherinian, "Dalit Theology in Tamil Christian Folk Music: A Transformative Liturgy by James Theophilus Appavoo," in *Popular Christianity in India: Rifting Between the Lines*, Selva J. Raj and Corinne G. Dempsey, ed. (State University of New York Press, 2002), 233-235.
- ⁷⁴ Robin Boyd, *op. cit.*, 160-161. Paul M. Collins, *op. cit.*, 80-81. Michael Von Bruck and J. Paul Rajashekar, "Hinduism and Christianity," in Erwin Fahlbusch and Geoffrey William, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, Vol. II, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999.
- ⁷⁵ A. J. Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine* (Kessinger Publishing, 2004), 1.
- ⁷⁶ Surendranath Dasgupta, *Hindu Mysticism: Six Lectures* (Forgotten Books, 1927), vii.
- ⁷⁷ Harvey D. Egan, *An Anthology of Christian Mysticism* (Liturgical Press, 1991), 606.
- ⁷⁸ Horst Georg Pohlmann, *Encounters with Hinduism: a contribution to inter-religious dialogue* (SCM Press, 1996), 75.
- ⁷⁹ Mariasusai Dhavamony, *Hindu-Christian Dialogue: Theological Soundings and Perspectives* (Rodopi, 2002), 47.
- ⁸⁰ Venkatarama Raghavan, ed., *Proceedings of the First International Sanskrit Conference*, Vol. II, Issue I, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, 1975.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁸² Alexander P. Varghese, *India: History, Religion, Vision and Contribution to the World* (Atlantic

Publishers and Distributers, 2008), 769.

⁸³ Harvey D. Egan, *An Anthology of Christian Mysticism* (Liturgical Press, 1991), 603.

⁸⁴ Norman Hetherington, *op. cit.*, 1-2.

⁸⁵ Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and Empire: post-colonial explorations* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 176-182.

⁸⁶ Paul M. Collins, *Christian Inculturation in India, op. cit.*, 41-47.

⁸⁷ K.P. Aleaz, *Christian Thought Through Advaita Vedanta*, Indian Society for Promoting Christianity (Delhi, 1996), 90-112; quoted in Sebastian C.H. Kim, *Christian Theology in Asia* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 50-51.

⁸⁸ Bob Robinson, *Christians Meeting Hindus: an analysis and theological critique of the Hindu-Christian encounter in India* (Oxford Center for Mission Studies, 2004), 54-55.

⁸⁹ John B. Carman, "Christian Interpretation of 'Hinduism': Between Understanding and Theological Judgment," in *India and the Indianness of Christianity: Essays on Understanding Historical, Theological and Bibliographical—in Honor of Robert Eric Frykenberg*, ed. Robert Eric Frykenberg and Richard Fox Young, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 237.