



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Book review: Christian identity and dalit religion in Hindu India, 1868-1947

Citation for published version:

Harding, C 2010, 'Book review: Christian identity and dalit religion in Hindu India, 1868-1947' *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol 61, no. 1, pp. 204-205., 10.1017/S0022046909991503

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1017/S0022046909991503](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046909991503)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Publisher final version (usually the publisher pdf)

Published In:

The Journal of Ecclesiastical History

Publisher Rights Statement:

© Harding, C. (2010). Book review: Christian identity and dalit religion in Hindu India, 1868-1947. *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 61(1), 204-205doi: 10.1017/S0022046909991503

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Another group of contributions discusses selected themes (such as sexuality and morality: Pakendorf) or events (such as the ‘cattle killing delusion’: Raum). Outstanding is, for instance, Walter Veit’s contribution. He focuses on an often overlooked type of literature: indigenous texts such as praise songs that were transmitted to Europe mainly by missionaries. While the ethnographic contributions of missionaries to the development of anthropology and religious studies have been discussed elsewhere, the impact that they had on European art is still neglected. Veit goes so far as to compare the impact of this type of oral art on European poets (such as the Dada modernist movement) with the impact of indigenous material art on artists such as Picasso, Kirchner and Heckel.

Not all contributions are in the field of mission studies; some reflect Hexham’s interests in philosophy, theology and religious studies. I want to single out Mark Mullins’s chapter on new religious movements because it reflects an important development in missionary activities that should be further studied. While representatives of the established Churches still dismiss indigenous movements, a simple study of the membership numbers of independent Churches in Asia and elsewhere demonstrate that these new ‘spontaneous’ forms of Christianity are much more successful than those transplanted by European missionaries. Mullins argues therefore that it is necessary to move from a Eurocentric to a polycentric perspective when looking at the interaction between different religions. Christianity became so successful in Japan and other countries that missionary initiatives from the former periphery to the old centre, Europe, can now be observed. Mullins, together with Veit and other contributors, demonstrates important new developments that will lead mission studies as well as religious studies into new areas, an excellent result for a *Festschrift*.

UNIVERSITY OF BANGOR

BETTINA E. SCHMIDT

Christian identity and dalit religion in Hindu India, 1868–1947. By Chad M. Bauman. (Studies in the History of Christian Missions.) Pp. xv + 276 incl. map. Grand Rapids, MI–Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2008. £22.99 (\$40) (paper).

978 0 8028 6276 1

JEH (61) 2010; doi:10.1017/S002204690991503

One of the most significant themes in the study of India over the past two decades has been that of ‘identity’: its constituents – language, religion, class, region, caste, profession, kinship, interests, beliefs – and the myriad forces which influence its creation and transformation. The language of identity has driven ever more nuanced, multi-disciplinary academic explorations and has contributed to an increasingly self-conscious, complex and riotously democratic social politics in India. Western Christianity and the question of conversion have been intimately and controversially bound up with the issue of identity in modern India, from the spurring effect of far-reaching critiques by colonial-era missionaries of Indian religion, morality, thought, dress and social behaviour to the anger and criticism levelled at converts seen by some Indians as motivated by material or social gain in surrendering their nationality, culture or membership of a local community. *Christian*

identity and dalit religion provides a vivid illustration of all this by means of a case study of the Satnamis, a *dalit* community (low-caste, formerly ‘untouchable’) many of whose members converted to Christianity. Bauman’s ‘historical ethnography [drawing on] methodologies in the study of religion, history and anthropology’ (pp. 20–1) has been a popular approach in recent years, as has the analytical emphasis upon the transformation of Christianity by the people and local cultures with which it came into contact. What is most interesting about Bauman’s study is firstly his attempt to ask questions of the past (1868–1947) in the light of contemporary religious politics in India and the difficulties of interpreting, in practice, the meaning of legal prohibitions on conversion ‘by force, fraud, or inducement’ (p. 16). Secondly, Bauman’s use of oral history alongside documentary material is revealing, contributing to and providing the means of illustrating his ‘primordialist’ position on conversion, which stresses semi-articulated feeling and intuition in the minds of converts over and above pure rational calculation. Chapter vi draws on interviews conducted amongst people of Satnami origin, and was, for this reviewer, the highlight of the book. Scholars in this area will find much that is familiar in the major themes which emerge from Bauman’s study: converts’ desire selectively to reformulate rather than totally to abandon their former lives and culture; education, medicine and womanhood as sites of contest and change. For readers newer to the question of Christianity and identity in India, Bauman’s approach offers a clear, sincere and engaging introduction.

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

CHRISTOPHER HARDING

Maurice Blondel, social Catholicism, and Action Française. The clash over the Church’s role in society during the Modernist era. By Peter J. Bernardi. Pp. xiii + 298. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009. \$79.95. 978 0 8132 1542 6
JEH (61) 2010; doi:10.1017/S0022046909991527

This is a rich but challenging book for the historian of modern Catholicism as it is written primarily with philosophers and theologians in mind. The key concepts such as monophorism may well be unfamiliar and difficult to grasp, but Bernardi succeeds in putting an intellectual dispute between the Catholic philosopher Maurice Blondel and his critic, the French Jesuit Pedro Descoqs, at the heart of the history of the Modernist crisis and contemporary debates about the role of the Church in secular society. Bernardi has already contributed articles to front-line theological journals like *Communio* on Blondel and his understanding of the nature-grace relationship and on the related movement for liberation theology. In this study, he draws on and complements the scholarship of Paul Misner on Social Catholicism. Blondel’s ‘philosophy of action’ emphasised human action as a moral and religious imperative here below in anticipation of the divine kingdom. Whereas Blondel favoured the sanctification of the world through active social Catholicism, ‘integralists’ saw in democratic Social Catholics part of the liberal, Modernist heresy afflicting the Church. Under the pen name ‘Testis’, Blondel spoke up for the Christian Democrats of the *Semaines Sociales* against those like Descoqs who defended an alliance with the political authoritarianism of Action Française. For Blondel, Charles