LANGUAGE AND RELIGION IN MODERN INDIA:
THE VERNACULAR LITERATURE OF HINDI CHRISTIANS

A Dissertation Presented

by

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to

The Faculty of Harvard Divinity School

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Theology

in the subject of

Theology

Harvard University

Cambridge, Massachusetts

April 2016
A persistent interest in a particular type of Christian witness is found in a substantial amount of Hindi-language Protestant (hereafter, ‘Hindi Christian’) literature in modern India. Across a range of texts like Hindi translations of the Bible, theo-ethical works, hymns, biblical commentaries, and poems, this literature calls attention to a form of Christian witness or discipleship that both is credible and recognizable and is public.

This witness aims to be credibly Christian: as I will show, Hindi Christian texts have regularly rejected a Hindu concept like avātār in favor of a neologism like dehādhāran to communicate a Christian notion of incarnation in a predominantly Hindu context. Yet, the variety of polytradition (or, shared) words found in Hindi Christian texts suggests a comfort with loose religious boundaries. The witness aims also to be recognizably Christian. For instance, Hindi Christian texts on theology and ethics persistently reflect on a virtuous Christian life with a view toward perceptions in multifaith contexts. Perceptions of Christians matter to the authors of these texts. The attention to Christian witness in such literature, then, is to a very public form of witness. A reading of the works of three prominent Hindi Christian scholars – Benjamin Khan,
Din Dayal, and Richard Howell – will show how a focus on the pluralistic context of Hindi Christian witness has shaped influential texts on ethics, theology, and evangelism in Hindi.

This dissertation is a first attempt in the academy of religion to study Hindi Christian texts in modern India. As a result, it seeks to achieve two goals: provide an introduction to Hindi Christian literature, and understand a prominent theme found in such literature. It is by no means an exhaustive study of Hindi Christian literature. Rather, it maps a literary landscape and subjects one trope therein to further examination. Protestant Christian literature in India has generally portrayed the purpose of Christian discipleship in two ways: by describing it as a response to salvific grace and by denying it is works righteousness. Hindi Christian texts shed light on another rationale: to present a credible and recognizable witness in a multifaith public context.
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Acknowledgments

Thanks be to God. I would also like to express a singular word of thanks to Professor Francis X. Clooney, SJ: mentor extraordinaire and pastoral advisor. Frank encouraged the exploration of uncharted territory and helped define the scope and substance of this project in a way that allowed for the patient study of new and unused sources. I am further grateful for both past and current members of my doctoral team who read the dissertation in its entirety or in part with much patience and care and who guided this project through its various stages with timely advice and constructive comments: Professors Susan Abraham, Ali S. Asani, Arun W. Jones, Charles M. Stang, and Ronald F. Thiemann.

Insightful conversations with a wide range of advisors and colleagues further enriched this study. They include Professors Kimberly C. Patton and Anne E. Monius, Rev. Dr. Ipe Joseph (former General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in India), and participants at different fora like the Conference of the New England-Maritimes Region of the American Academy of Religion (Boston), the Comparative Doctoral Colloquium at Harvard Divinity School (Cambridge), the Oxford Symposium on Religious Studies (Oxford), the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute of the World Council of Churches (Busan), Ways of Knowing: Graduate Conference on Religion at Harvard Divinity School (Cambridge), and the Asian Theological Summer Institute at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (Philadelphia). I am very grateful to those participants at these gatherings who attended the sessions where I presented my findings; their comments and questions helped refine this study in numerous ways.
Modern research across years and nations requires considerable institutional support and my research would not have been possible without the generosity and collaboration of the following institutions. The South Asia Institute at Harvard supported two research trips to India that were indispensible to field research. Harvard Divinity School’s Dissertation Fellowship and Travel Grant, the Selva J. Raj Endowed International Dissertation Research Fellowship of the American Academy of Religion, and the Educational Grant Program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America offered the time and space both to complete the project and to enrich it with research at the missionary archives in Angus Library at the University of Oxford. In India, two institutions deserve special acknowledgments: the Hindi Theological Literature Committee based in Jabalpur served as the primary source of Hindi Christian texts. Its efforts were complemented by the Delhi-based Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. In concert, these two groups provided both research personnel and invaluable research assistance. To each individual in these organizations who reviewed my work and found it worthy of support, I offer my deepest gratitude. Finally, I am also thankful to the International Journal of Hindu Studies for agreeing to publish part of chapter three in a forthcoming issue.

This study was a very collaborative effort and the following people deserve special mention as instrumental partners since this project first took shape: Rev. Dr. John H. Anand (my primary collaborator in India), Emily Burgoyne (my primary advisor at Angus), Rev. Dr. Ashis Amos, Daniel Manorath (who travelled to Lucknow in India to collect books on my behalf), Kathryn Kunkel and Barbara Boles (who managed the doctoral process with great care), Beth Flaherty (who helped me fundraise the resources needed for research), and Ram Ikbal Rai (who served as
my travel agent in India and helped me gather a library of Hindi Christian texts during numerous trips to Delhi and Jabalpur).

John Anand, the long-serving and current editor of the Hindi Theological Literature Committee, deserves a special word of gratitude. He spent countless hours educating me on Hindi Christian texts, endured endless rounds of questions and clarifications in person and over the phone, sent me hundreds of Hindi Christian books and materials on my request, and introduced me to scholars and authors of Hindi Christian materials throughout India. This project would surely not have been possible without his involvement.
For S.
Chapter One

Credible and Public:

Hindi Christian Literature
Hindi Christian literature is not yet a subject of academic study in the West or a subject for scholars beyond those few who engage Christian materials in Hindi. Hindi literature from central (and north) India, however, today is part of scholarship beyond South Asia, especially in studies of devotionals, poems, and novels. This dissertation hopes to do for Hindi Christian works and ideas in wider theological discourses what has already happened in the case of other ideas from central India. Not all Indian Christians use Hindi. A survey of modern Indian Christian literature known outside India would reveal literature from southern India (in languages like Malayalam and Tamil) and from Catholic centers of research and production throughout the subcontinent. Awareness of and engagement with Hindi Christian Protestant literature are, however, conspicuously negligible when compared to other better-known sources. Scholarship on Indian Christianity has ignored Hindi Christian literature. This dissertation corrects this state of affairs.

1. They include, outside of India, Dr. Arun W. Jones (Dan and Lillian Hankey Associate Professor of World Evangelism, Candler/Emory), a member of my dissertation committee, and Dr. Timothy C. Tennent (President, Asbury Theological Seminary). In India, key scholars who have engaged Hindi Christian materials include Dr. John H. Anand (Editor, Hindi Theological Literature Committee, or H.T.L.C.), an advisor to my project, Dr. Ravi Tiwari (Registrar, Senate of Serampore), and Bishop Din Dayal (Former Moderator, Church of North India).

2. See Hawley and Juergensmeyer, Songs of the Saints of India; Hawley, Three Bhakti Voices; Thiel-Horstmann, Bhakti in Current Research, 1979-1982; Horstmann, Bhakti in Current Research, 2001-2003; Hopkins, Singing the Body of God; Malik, Hindi Poetry Today; Schomer, Mahadevi Varma; Schomer and McLeod, The Sant Tradition of India; and Hansen, Grounds for Play. Catalogues of Hindi literature are also available, from Blumhardt’s colonial-era Catalogues of the Hindi, Panjabi, Sindhi, and Pushtu Printed Books in the Library of the British Museum (1893) to McGregor’s Hindi Literature of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries (1974).

3. See Shukla, Hindī Sāhity kā Itihās and Hawley, Three Bhakti Voices.
This dissertation is a careful study of Christian literature in the Hindi language, or Hindi Christian literature, in modern India. More specifically, the dissertation argues that Hindi Christian materials in central India seek to present Christian life and community as faithful and credible in a minority and challenging context. They reveal a persistent attention to the social function of Christian words and deeds in a multifaith context. This credible witness is recognizably Christian in practice and idioms and diligently ethical in theory and purpose. I will show that in Hindi Christian literature – across songs, hymns, poems, guidebooks, works on theology-ethics, and Christian narratives – one finds a persistent attention to a credible, recognizable, and public Christian witness.

This attention is also evident in debates on Christian uses of Hindi (including translation choices), media representations of Hindi-speaking Christians, and on discipleship and the formation of faith and identity in multifaith contexts (a topic of particular concern for Hindi-
speaking Christians). Through a close reading of hymns (chapter one), sources and themes (chapter two), translation choices (chapter three), guidebooks (chapter four), and works on theology and ethics (chapter five), this work will demonstrate the social goals of theological and ethical ideas in Hindi Christian literature. In doing so, it will highlight the public reasons for theological and ethical claims in modern Hindi Christian literature.

Modern Hindi Christian literature, by which I mean literature in post-1940s central and north India, is a corpus of materials by those who have used and continue to use Hindi and its cognates to write and translate Christian works. More specifically, and as explained below, I focus on Protestant Hindi Christian materials available in modern India through both church-based and independent publication houses, most prominent among which is the Hindi Theological Literature Committee (H.T.L.C.). Since its founding in 1954, H.T.L.C. has served as the premier, modern, ecumenical, agency dedicated exclusively to the publication and promotion of Hindi-language Christian literature in India. To study modern Hindi-language Christian literature is, I will show, to engage a set of sources that can contribute to the study of Indian Christian theology, theology and language, religious identity in minority contexts, Hindu-Christian relations in modern India, and the social functions of religious life.

Hindi Christian materials define sin as concrete and particular instances of broken relationships, violence, drunkenness, gambling, adultery, greed, deceit, and bodily illness. Consequently, salvation involves concrete changes from these realities of sin. The tendency to sound such

8. Nearly 40 percent of Indians use standard Hindi or one of its cognates and Hindi is used as a language of theology by Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and people of other faith traditions. As a particular language used by religious communities to communicate and record claims about God and existence, religious literature and theology in Hindi is not exclusively Christian in nature. However, in my research it refers exclusively to the production and communication of ideas and practices in the context of Christian communities.
“earthy” notes makes discipleship testable and identifiable as a faithful witness to one’s saved state in Christ. A visibly moral life, while a mark of faithfulness within a Christian community, also functions as a communiqué to society-at-large. In a socio-political environment where Christians desire greater engagement with non-Christian neighbors and discernible religious identity, an ethical life functions as a credible public witness to one’s religious values. I will show how and why certain social goals have shaped and continue to shape the form and content of modern Hindi Christian literature in central India.⁹

These materials also argue that Christians do not earn or merit salvation but emphasize that a Christian should live a disciplined and visibly ‘Christian’ life. These materials, in their use of obligatory and prescriptive language (see especially chapter four), seek to assert, without being works-centered, that a Christian life is expected of a Christian believer. In Parivartan: Masīh se Milāp (“Conversion: Meeting with Christ”¹⁰), for instance, Richard Howell writes, “[Paul] stresses on internal conversion that occurs according to the grace of God. That works from inside to outside.” Further, works do not make a convert spiritual; rather, internal conversion is turned outward: “[t]he external work or accomplishment of our conversion is revealed through our ethical responsible behavior or values.”¹¹ Given the public role of a Christian life in a predominantly non-Christian milieu, proper works (Christian ethics) in the public realm invite

⁹ The results of studies on the effects of context on vernacular Christian theologies in central (e.g., Kunnatholy, St. Thomas’ Christians in Madhya Pradesh) or other parts of India, say, in or Malayalam- or Tamil-speaking areas, may resonate with the claims in this dissertation. Such comparative assessments are outside the scope of this essay even if they are rich avenues for further research.

¹⁰ Literally, parivartan is translated as “change” but, in light of the book’s content and the word’s common usage in the context of Indian Christianity, “conversion” is a more accurate translation of Howell’s title.

¹¹ Howell, Parivartan, 5-6: “[paulus] āntārik parivartan par jor detā hai jo paramesvar kī dayā ke anusār hotā hai. Vah bāhītār se bāhar kī or kāry kartā hai.” Further, “hamāre parivartan kā bāhyākārī kāry yā siddhātā hamāre naitik jimmedār vyavhār ya mūlyom dvārā pragaṭ hotā hai.”
sustained attention because such a Christian life has many audiences, theological, social, and political.

Consider, as an instance, the form of soteriology that recurs across prominent Hindi Christian works (discussed further in chapter four). This soteriology involves at least three aspects. It involves the recognition of one’s salvation by God’s grace, active acceptance of that grace both as an individual and as a member of a particular Christian community, and the life-long responsibility of the recipient of grace to live in a particular way (reminiscent of a life of discipline).

Christ dies for our sins, makes us right with God, and teaches us a particular ethic. These events are objective and in them God-in-Christ is the agent of action. As Khan writes (see also Howell 2006; Masih and Peter 2007), humans could not have restored their broken relation with God; divine intervention was necessary. “To re-establish the broken relation between God and human, the removal of sin and a total transformation are necessary. A human cannot do this by [her] power. A human cannot obtain this by following scriptures, [or] by [her] works.”12 A caution against holding scriptures as a manual whose injunctions must be followed legalistically in order to attain salvation is conspicuous in Khan’s reference to ineffectual scriptures (niyamśāstr) rather than ineffectual rules (niyam) in a context where Hindi Christians know the Bible as a collection of the Purānā aur Nayā Dharm Niyam [the old and new religious rules or principals]. God’s grace, not Scripture, is the source of salvation.

So saved (and informed of one’s being saved), a person accepts Christ as a personal savior and in doing so (self-)commits to a particular way of living in the world (e.g., Khan 2009; Dayal 2005; Howell 2006; Mahendra 2008; James 1978). This is a subjective event in which primary agency belongs to a person. Now committed, a Christian is responsible to act in ways commensurate with discipleship of Christ. “It is necessary for every Christian to know the principles that shape [her] behavior and to be sure about them” in light of her “duties” (kartavy). While practically one may or may not be able to live a disciplined life, a considerable number of life-guidebooks that clarify expectations from Christian men, women, leaders, clergy, and children drive home the importance of personal responsibility.

Debates on the relation between works and grace tend to focus on the efficacy of works with respect to salvation or on an ethical life as an outward expression of discipleship. While the attention to works is not exclusively Protestant but can be found in Roman Catholic literature in India, the social goals of ethical living in minority contexts – examined here in the context of Protestant Hindi Christian literature – provide a particular rationale for works-heavy theologies. Hindi-language Christian materials emphasize ethical living because they consider ethical living both a response to grace and a message to the larger community. Further, as I will detail, the ways in which Hindi has been used to communicate this message have both affected the content of the message and have been shaped by it.

13. E.g., Khan, Khristīy Nītiśāstr, 99: “That person is a Christian who has dedicated himself to God and who attempts to live a holy life... Paul writes to Christians: “You have been called to be holy” (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2). The word ‘holy’ does not connote substantive holiness but connotes ethical holiness.” (Masīhi jan vah hai jisne apne āpko paramēśvar ke prati samarpit kiyā hai aur vah ek pavitr jīvan vyatī karne kā prayatn kartā hai. Paulus masīhiyom ko ikhtiā hai: “tum pavitr hone ke lie bulāe gae ho” (romiyoṃ 1:7; 1 kurinthiyoṃ 1:2). Pavitr šabd mein tātvik pavitratā kā bhāv na hokar naitik pavitratā kā bhāv hai.)

14. James, Mahilā Dharmēvijñān Pāthya-Pustak, 102: Pratyek khristīy jan ke liye yah āvāsyak hai ki vah apne ācaraṃ bandēvāle siddhāntom ko jāne aur unke sambandh mein use niścay ho. See also Howell, Parivartan and Khan, Khristīy Nītiśāstr.
SCOPE OF THE STUDY

‘Hindi’ can refer both to an individual language and, as a macroterm, to an assembly of many cognate languages and to the cultural context in which such languages shape ways of being. One way to distinguish between the different uses of the referent ‘Hindi’ is to distinguish those who identify and use standard Hindi as their mother tongue from those who identify and use one of Hindi’s cognate languages as their mother tongue. According to the India Census Bureau, the macroterm Hindi is a collection of some 49 cognates, including Awadhi, Banjari, Bhojpuri, Bundeli/Bundelkhan, Chhattisgarhi, Haryanvi, Khariboli, Lodhi, Magadhi/Magahi, Marwari, Nagpuri, Pahari, Rajasthan, and Sarguji. According to India’s 2001 Census, around 422 million Indians named Hindi or a cognate as their mother tongue. Around 258 million Indians, or 25.09 percent of the resident citizens of India, named standard, modern Hindi as their mother

15. McGregor, *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*, vii: ‘Modern Hindi’ denotes a language written in the Devanagari script in a relatively standardized form. Its pronunciation and spoken forms are less standardized. Modern or standard Hindi is in general use in most of central and north India. Modern Hindi gained currency in the period leading up to the 1860s as a “medium of education and instruction.” By the 1900s standard Hindi had become a “well established vehicle for journalism and belles lettres” in central and north India. Modern Hindi is probably the third-most used language in the world.

Due to its growing popularity in the Indian subcontinent and beyond, ‘Hindi in the Devanagari script’ was recognized as an official language of India in 1947. As explained later in chapter six, this popularity must be understood also in the context of the movement in the nineteenth century to promote Hindi as the language of Hindustan.

16. Historically, languages like Awadhī and Brajbhāṣā should be correctly understood as cognates of modern Hindi. As Stuart McGregor notes, “[i]t is historically and linguistically inappropriate to speak of early Brajbhasha and Avadhi as dialects of modern Hindi, which they long preceded as literary languages.” They can, however, from the perspective of literary studies in the twenty-first century be considered “as falling within a composite ‘literary tradition of Hindi.’” (McGregor, “The Progress of Hindi, Part 1,” 913). The many languages listed along with Hindi in India’s census, then, can be understood as part of a ‘Hindi family,’ though with vocabularies and speech patterns that are historically and linguistically different.
tongue.\textsuperscript{17} In this work, ‘Hindi’ always refers to modern Hindi and the dissertation and its claims are limited to those in the context of Christian materials in standard or modern Hindi.\textsuperscript{18}

The geographical spread of Hindi and its cognates provides us with what can be called India’s ‘Hindi areas.’ These areas are those parts of India where Hindi and its cognates are the predominant language of communication and commerce. While Hindi speakers can be found throughout India and around the world, the literature and materials that I have engaged are part and parcel of the life of Hindi Christians in central India. The borders of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand roughly constitute the southern and south-eastern boundaries of this area, the eastern boundaries of Rajasthan and the northern boundary of Gujarat its western limit, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh its eastern and north-eastern limit, and Haryana, Delhi, and Uttarakhand its northern limit. There are users of standard Hindi outside this territory but these soft boundaries help place manageable limits on my research field.

The dissertation will deal primarily with Protestant materials in Hindi areas. References hereafter to Hindi-language Christian theology and more broadly to Hindi-language Christian literature, then, point to Christian materials produced by the many Anglican, Baptist, Congregationalist, Lutheran, and Methodist presses in the region. These Protestant materials mostly come from the Hindi Theological Literature Committee, Lucknow Publishing House (L.P.H.), and the Indian Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (I.S.P.C.K.). Based, respectively, in Jabalpur

\textsuperscript{17} See http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_Data_Online/Language/Statement1.htm. India’s national population in 2001 stood at 1.028 billion (http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/). Data from the 2011 Census has not been released yet.

\textsuperscript{18} Studies of vernacular Christian materials in cognate languages like Awadhī will further enrich this study of Hindi Christian literature, but such studies are beyond the scope of this work.
(Madhya Pradesh), Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh), and Delhi, these produce most of the Hindi-language Christian materials in central and north India.\textsuperscript{19}

The work of Roman Catholic Christians in central and north India exceeds in size and scope the theological output and social footprint of Protestant Christians in the region. As such, there exists a rich history of Roman Catholic religious literature in Hindi. Central India, especially Madhya Pradesh, is home also to Syrian Catholic, St. Thomas, Orthodox, and non-denominational evangelical and Pentecostal Christians. In order to organize the sources employed in this dissertation in a manageable way, I will pay limited attention to this diversity in its description of Hindi-language Christian ideas in the region and will keep its focus on Christian materials available from the Protestant sources identified above. Hence, a reference to ‘Hindi Christian literature’ or ‘Hindi Christian materials’ or ‘Hindi Christian theology’ should be understood as a reference to \textit{Hindi-language Protestant Christian} materials and ideas in central and north India.

Finally, though I address the colonial history of Hindi Christian literature, the dissertation focuses on modern Christian materials, which can be roughly dated from the formation in 1954 of the Hindi Theological Literature Committee, India’s premier publisher of Hindi-language Christian materials. An early example of Hindi Christian materials comes from 1877 in the form of a conversion account of a person named “Bhayāharṇ Dās,” \textit{Kaise Pāyā Muktidātā, arthāt

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{19} Ethnographic and textual data from field research in 2010-11, partly funded by the South Asia Institute at Harvard, covered central and north Indian collections, including those at the Hindi Theological Literature Committee (Jabalpur) and Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (Delhi). I collated literature on translation history and theories concerning Hindi scriptures and conducted interviews with practitioners and scholars in Delhi, Nagpur, Jabalpur, and Damoh. A research assistant from India visited and accessed the archives of the Methodist publishing house in Lucknow and the Lutheran publishing house in Chhindwara responsible for considerable Hindi Christian literature in the region.
\end{flushright}
Bhayāharnādās kā Itihās.\textsuperscript{20} Written in September of 1877, \textit{Kaise Pāyā Muktidātā} was “signed” by one Rāmsimh, who attested to the account’s veracity.\textsuperscript{21}

Published in the holy city of Benares, the account describes the path to conversion of a Hindu mystic. Written in Kaithi – a Nagri-based free-flowing language used by Kaiths, the writer caste of the region – the account is polemic in nature and its place of publication a strategic choice to challenge Hinduism on its own turf.\textsuperscript{22} Though the conversion account was not published in the standard Hindi on which I focus, it is a reminder both of the historical legacy of Christian publications in Hindi that precede the materials I study and of the scope of Hindi-language Christian materials beyond those produced in standard Hindi.

By 1917, a list of Hindi-language Christian literature prepared by the missionary council in central and north India catalogued 490 books (this list is discussed below). Hindi translations of the gospels and Hindi publications were a large part of the work of the Baptist missionaries in Serampore, with the first translation of Hindi gospels c. 1818. Further, an 1875 account of (Protestant) Christian vernacular publications mentions Benjamin Schultze’s 1743 \textit{Summa Doctrinae Christianae} as the “first Christian book printed in Hindustani.”\textsuperscript{23} The history of Hindi Christian literature spans more than 270 years and the dissertation will address this history and important actors within it as part of its historical analysis. The sources under immediate

\textsuperscript{20} Titled “How I Found the Saviour, or The Shepherd Convert of Monghyr” in English, and produced by The Rev. Thomas Evans, a Baptist missionary at Monghyr (or Munger) on the banks of the Ganges river in south-central Bihar, \textit{Kaise Pāyā Muktidātā} was published by the Medical Hall Press, Benares.

\textsuperscript{21} Evans, \textit{Kaise Pāyā Muktidātā} (“How I Found the Savior”), 10-11.

\textsuperscript{22} The Welsh Baptists were also known for such publications as \textit{Rām Parīkṣā} (a character examination of Ram, two editions), \textit{Shiv Parīkṣā} (a character examination of Shiva, two editions), and \textit{Sat Gurū kī Bulāhat} (the teacher’s call, two editions). Hooper, \textit{A Welshman in India}, 162.

\textsuperscript{23} The book was published by the Orphan House in Halle. \textit{Conference on Urdu and Hindi Christian Literature}, 46.
consideration, however, will be those that emanate from the latest era of Hindi Christian literature.

**CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP: WHY STUDY HINDI CHRISTIAN LITERATURE**

To the best of my knowledge no work exists that examines Hindi-language Christian literature in modern India. As an example, while Christian literature in Hindi abounds, a search of Harvard’s Widener and Andover-Harvard Theological libraries for “Hindi” + “Christian” + “literature” reveals a single-digit list of references in English, prominent among them a 1917 catalogue of Christian works in Hindi and *Masīhī Āwāz*, a journal of Hindi Christian theology published since 1972.

Further, the influence of these sources in the academy of religion is minimal. The 1917 catalogue is occasionally cited as a historical marker in the context of mission histories while a search for *Masīhī Āwāz* among relevant books or articles reveals a JSTOR record for a 2008 article by Chad Bauman on resistance to religious conversions in the *International Journal of Hindu Studies*. Theological books in Hindi account for a considerable part of Hindi Christian literature yet both theological essays and other Christian literature are absent from a wide variety of modern research on Indian Christianity and theology.

This neglect is not limited to Western scholarship. The India section of *Asian Christian Theologies*, a comprehensive accounting of theological thinking in Asia published jointly by the I.S.P.C.K., Claretian, and Orbis Books in 2002, notes works written by 103 writers across 17

languages (Bengali, Danish, English, French, German, Hindi, Kannada, Khasi, Malayalam, Marathi, Mizo, Naga, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Tamil, and Telugu). Yet, it includes a disproportionately negligible amount of Hindi Christian authors and publications in its listings. A vast majority of the books and Hindi Christian authors engaged in this dissertation are absent from *Asian Christian Theologies*.

As an example, two Hindi-language texts seem to be cited among the nearly 1130 books in *Asian Christian Theologies*’ India section: James Massey’s *Masīhī Dalit: Ik Itihāsik Parīkshā* (“Christian Dalits: A Historical Analysis”) published in 1993 and Vandana Mataji’s 2-volume *Śabd, Śaktī, Sangam* (“Word, Power, Union”) published in 1995. Indirect recognition of Hindi-related writers and practitioners is more available: Vandana Mataji, whose English-language works are referenced in *Asian Christian Theologies*, wrote hymns and used Hindi; Viman Tilak’s poetry crossed over Marathi and Hindi; and James Massey does much work in Hindi.

Without taking away from the momentous achievement that *Asian Christian Theologies* represents, and while acknowledging the unprecedented, wide-ranging, and indispensible source of reference it has become for any serious scholar of Christianity in Asia, it remains the case that references to Hindi works are difficult to find in a project that seeks to provide a substantial introduction to Christianity in Asia and, more pertinent to this study, to Indian Christian theology. This can be partly attributed to the English-language focus of *Asian Christian Theologies*; to its intent to offer “a survey of the writings [of Asian theology] in English” while

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“drawing on the writings in many languages of the region.”Nevertheless, the comparatively limited attention to Hindi writings is conspicuous in a work that claims “[e]xtensive research has been undertaken to ensure that a wide range of vernacular materials are included and outlined.”

Few works within communities of religious scholarship examine Hindi-language Christian literature as a collection of ideas and texts. Surveys of Hindi-language Christian literature tend to organize them in bibliographies rather than to analyze and introduce them in the wider frame of their themes and objectives. Further, no substantial interrogation of the theological proposals in Hindi-language Christian literature is readily available in English. Numerous works in Hindi deal with Christian theology, church history, and the gospel. Yet, as my research shows, these books rarely escape their local use and do not contribute to wider, pan-Indian or extra-India conversations on religion and society. I address this state of affairs by offering a holistic assessment of Hindi Christian literature in a way that reads a variety of published works in light of a few intersecting features of Hindi Christianity: language and theology, Hindi and Hindu-Christian relations, and the social goals of religious language. Such a reading constitutes three acts: it presents an intellectual history and map of Christian literature in Hindi; based on this cartography it identifies some prominent themes that run through much of Hindi Christian literature; finally, it offers an explanation for the content of Hindi Christian literature.

The dissertation contributes to the study of religions in four particular ways. First, it constitutes a first study of Protestant Hindi Christian literature, increases the presence of Hindi-language materials in the academy of religion and western theological circles in particular, and introduces

to an English-speaking audience the religious ideas of Hindi-speaking Christians. Many chapters include English translations for the first time of substantial quotations from influential works in Hindi Christian literature. Second, it examines the social and political functions of (ideal) religious lives in Hindi-speaking central India. Through case-studies on translation decisions (on the use of dehādhāraṇ, a neologism, to communicate the incarnation of Christ) and on the reaction of Hindi Christian authors to public portrayals of Christianity in India it sheds light on the relationship between language, theology, and religious identity that is found in Hindi Christian materials. Third, to explore the ways in which Christian witness and its vocabulary serve a public function, this dissertation examines the relationship between works and grace in Hindi Christian literature. Finally, it explores the particular ways in which attention to social witness has shaped the religious ideas of a faith community in a minority context. In doing so, the dissertation sheds light on those rationales for Christian discipleship that go beyond presenting discipleship as an expression of faith or exemplar to emulate. As we will see, Hindi Christian materials offer a particular form of Christian discipleship – credible and recognizable – that is directed toward very public purposes – interfaith relations and Christian identity in a multireligious context.

32. Negotiations by religious subjects with both their old and new faiths (e.g., see Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*; Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*; Raj and Dempsey, *Popular Christianity in India*; Kim, *In Search of Identity*; and Bauman, “Postcolonial Anxiety and Anti-Conversion Sentiment”) is one form in which the social and public functions of religious lives are asserted by carving a type of religious life that is agreeable to the negotiating subjects. The degree to which Hindi Christians can and do mix-and-match, and contextual limitations on and catalysts of their ability to do so, will be covered in the dissertation. The lives of Hindi Christians cannot be generalized as passive or active in mixing-and-matching. It is, therefore, not my claim that the works-heavy theologies and their social stance I define apply to all Hindi Christian communities, but that they are recurrent features of numerous Hindi Christian texts and sources.
In *Constructing Indian Christianities* (2014), Bauman and Young, along with contemporary scholars of Indian Christianity, ask an important question: Who or What is an Indian Christian? Their query raises many related issues. What is the defining marker? Is it religion – *Christianity*? Is it a nation – *India*? Or, is it culture – a certain *Indian-ness*? Is it all these things, none of which can be packed into a neat definitional box? Is it none of them? They further ask whether a term like ‘Indian Christian’ “impose[s]” an “alien taxonomy on phenomena that in the final analysis remain fluid and stubbornly unreifiable.” Similar questions can be raised for a term like ‘Hindi Christian(s)’ or a modifier like ‘Hindi Christian’ in descriptions like *Hindi Christian* literature and *Hindi Christian* materials. Similar questions can be raised also of a study like this that explores the relationship between a language (Hindi) and religious identity (Christianity). What is ‘Hindi-language Christian’ literature? Is it defined by its ‘Hindi-ness’? Or, by its ‘Christian-ness’? The danger of reification remains, but taxonomy is problematic, more so when it makes exclusive and permanent claims. The titular plural in *Constructing Indian Christianities* seeks to address this danger by making an important (counter)claim to conventional studies of Christianity in India: it notes upfront, as I would put it, the permanent diversity that characterizes a faith that is still undergoing construction in India. The process to be ‘Christian’ in India has not stopped; Indian Christianities are still under construction.

The use of ‘Hindi Christians’ might be compared to existing descriptive like ‘Tamil Christians.’ To say, however, that the use of ‘Hindi Christians’ is akin to that of ‘Tamil Christians’ is debatable. Tamilians are, it could be reasonably argued, a people with a language and culture,

33. Bauman and Young, *Constructing Indian Christianities*, xiii.
but ‘Hindi’ is too broad a description, in its numerous cognates, in its geography, and in its
difference from other local languages like Awadhī and Brajbhāṣā (McGregor, 2003) and Urdu, to
act as a unifying modifier the way ‘Tamil’ does in a term like ‘Tamil Christian.’ ‘Hindi
Christian’ is also a novel term in English-language Indian Christian scholarship, even though
“Hindi Christian literature” has been in use among Hindi-language Christian scholarship,
evidence suggests, at least since 1970, when C. W. David, the editor of H.T.L.C. at the time,
commented that “[i]t is the misfortune of Hindi Christian literature that it has very few
readers.”34 For these reasons, Hindi Christians and Hindi Christianity are terms that invite an
explanation.

As a description of the Christians who use standard or modern Hindi, ‘Hindi Christians’ is a
properly functional and operationally valid term for many reasons. First, modern Hindi, with
some of its cognates, functions as the language of commonly recognized hymns and bhajans in
Hindi-speaking northern and central India. Recognition of this shared liturgical heritage has
brought Hindi-speaking congregations together. This shared heritage, as an instance, underlies
the willingness of ecumenical bodies like the Madhya Pradesh Christian Council and a
denominational body like the Methodist Church in north and central India to collaborate for the
last 45 years on producing and regularly updating a common hymnbook, Ārādhănā ke Gīt, for
Hindi-speaking congregations in Madhya Pradesh (M.P.), Uttar Pradesh (U.P.), and Bihar.35

34. David’s Foreword in Sinha, Masīhī Ācaraṇ, ii (kh): Hindī masīhī sāhity kā durbhāgy hai ki uske pāṭhak bahut kam hai.

35. Ārādhănā ke Gīt is a collection of hymns and bhajans “so that one book might be printed which would be
suitable for both Hindi and Urdu speaking areas in M.P., U.P. and Bihar.” (Ārādhănā ke Gīt [Music Edition], i).
It was commissioned by the Madhya Pradesh Christian Council (M.P.C.C.) as a revision of the Hindi hymnal,
Masīhī Gīt Sangrah, in which “the paucity of contemporary Indian compositions, the dominance of difficult Western
compositions, and the absence of easy, clear, and currently popular language was starting to be painfully felt”
(Ārādhănā ke Gīt, iii: Masīhī gīt sangrah meṁ vartāmān bhārātīy racnaōṁ kī kamī, kliṣṭ pāścāty racnāōṁ kā ādhiky, aur saral, spaṣṭ aur vartāmān pracalit bhāṣā kā abhāv khalne lagā thā.) M.P.C.C.’s Hymn Book Revision
Second, Hindi is a recognized language of instruction in many seminaries in north India, some of which, like Leonard Theological College in Jabalpur (M.P.), are dedicated to theological education in Hindi and to the preparation of pastors and church leaders for Hindi-speaking congregations.

This shared liturgical and educational heritage is also reflected, most conspicuously, in the systematic production and promotion of Hindi Christian literature. Recognition of the need for Hindi Christian literature led to the creation of the Hindi Theological Literature Committee in 1954. Since then, H.T.L.C. has served as a primary catalyst for a family of literature that can be properly regarded as the shared literature of Hindi-speaking Christians and congregations in the region.

Finally, Hindi-speaking churches have invested in their shared literature, liturgy, and theological education by jointly and strongly supporting the work of Hindi-focused institutions like H.T.L.C. and Leonard Theological College. As John Henry Anand, the current editor of H.T.L.C., noted in 2008, “The Principals of theological colleges, church bishops, pastors, publication houses, distributors of our books, boards, and missionary organizations from the Hindi regions are giving

Committee began its work in the first week of March 1967 after conducting a survey of Hindi-Speaking congregations to solicit views on which hymns and bhajans to include and exclude. The Methodist hymnbook was also undergoing a revision at the time, and in 1970, the Methodist Revision Committee joined the M.P.C.C.’s committee. Ārādhānā ke Gīt includes both inherited hymns and songs of contemporary origin. Further, not all the authors, composers, and translators of the hymns in Ārādhānā ke Gīt are recorded. As the editors of the Music Edition write, “We have made every effort to discover and acknowledge the authors and composers of the Indian songs and bhajans but still we are uncertain about many” (Ārādhānā ke Gīt [Music Edition], iii). Similarly, in the case of some hymns, Ārādhānā ke Gīt does not provide the name(s) of translator(s) into Hindi or merely lists them as “Anon” (Anonymous). In the hymns examined in this dissertation, I have provided the names of authors, composers, and translators where available and have noted those places where Ārādhānā ke Gīt does not provide such information.
us their full support.”36 Across a span of geographies, denominations, and contexts, Christians and congregations in modern India’s Hindi-speaking regions belie any easy unity; they certainly resist any mistaken claim of uniformity. Yet, the presence of a shared ecumenical legacy, dedicated institutions of learning and formation, and shared literature and worship allow this study to describe as Hindi Christians those congregations and Christians who use modern Hindi as their primary language of worship, liturgy, Christian education, faith formation, and congregational life.

The intellectual history of religious studies in South Asia further attests to the use and benefits of religious and linguistic descriptors like ‘Hindi Christian’ in studying Christianity in India because they say something about the role of language and religion in the formation of faith and identity. They point to a family of influences. The late Selva J. Raj, for instance, wrote ethnographies of ‘Santal Catholics’ so as to acknowledge the many ways in which this community combined Santali tribal and Roman Catholic Christian elements in their religious life.37 Kerry P.C. San Chirico writes of the Khrist Bhaktas of the Hindi-belt who worship Christ in personal and communal devotion yet remain unbaptized and Hindu according to the religious taxonomy of India’s Constitution – and its Census Bureau, one may add – adapting Catholic beliefs and Hindu temple practices to a bhakti mode of religious life.38

36. Anand’s Preface in Sinha, Maśīhī Ācaraṇ: “Hindī kśetriot ke thiylājikal kalejoṁ ke prinsipal, carc ke biśap, pāṣtar, prakāṣan saṃsthāeṁ, hamārī pustakoṁ ke vitrak, bords, miśnarī saṃsthāeṁ hamārī bharsak madad kartī haiṁ.” This support (as I discuss below) itself represents a sea change in institutional church attitudes toward Hindi Christian literature.

37. In its attention to the role of language, however, my work goes beyond Raj’s work on Santal Catholics.

38. San Chirico, in Bauman and Young, Constructing Indian Christianities, 23-28.
Like Raj and San Chirico, Vasudha Narayanan recalls the vast number of Hindus and Christians who are “multiritual” and “polytheological” in their beliefs and practices. Hindu and Christian veneration at The Church of the Infant Jesus in Bangalore (studied by Narayanan), and Hindu, Muslim, and Christian veneration of Sister Alphonsa in Kottayam (studied by Corinne Dempsey) are some of the ways in which Christianity in India is “neither homogenous nor uniform but essentially plural and diverse.”

“Christianity” in India is a congeries of beliefs and practices inspired by faith traditions and social histories whose constituents are never too far from change.

A careful study of the complex interplay between literature and religion cautions against claims of “coherent regional tradition[s]” bound by a common language through time and geography in the use of a term ‘Hindi Christianity.’ ‘Hindi’ in this study, for instance, is limited to modern Hindi, yet the hymns and books available to Hindi-speakers include works in Bhojpuri and Hindi-Urdu. For instance, several popular hymns by the composer Ahsan in Ārādhānā ke Gīt, the widely used hymnbook, are in Urdu. Histories, communities, and practices in the region are too diverse and pragmatic for this study to hold steady on an uncomplicated notion of “Hindi Christians.” Nevertheless, the interplay of literary and linguistic choices, and the formation of faiths and practices, offers a rich and available resource to examine closely the methods and intents of Hindi-language Christian literature in modern India.

39. See Raj and Dempsey’s introduction in Popular Christianity in India, 5.

40. See, for instance, recent reports of Christian beliefs and practices in Raj and Dempsey, Popular Christianity in India (2002); Young, India and the Indianness of Christianity (2009); and, Bauman and Young, Constructing Indian Christianities (2014).

41. Monius, In Search of “Tamil Buddhism,” 12-18, 235-36. See also her Afterword in Bauman and Young, Constructing Indian Christianities, 239-45.
In *The Saint in the Banyan Tree* (2012), David Mosse critiques “short-time-frame ethnographies” that unearth cultural adaptations with a bias toward disjunctions between culture and Christianity and that pay inadequate attention to the stability in beliefs and practices embedded in centuries-long traditions like Orthodox and Catholic Christianity in India. As a “source of distinctive forms of thought, action, and modes of signification” he writes, studies of “profoundly localized” Christianity that eschew presenting the relation between “culture” and “Christianity” as continuity or rupture offer a necessary corrective to modern studies of Indian Christianity. The Tamil Catholicism of the pseudonymous Alapuram in his work charts a rich terrain with features that have gradually emerged from the “complex intercultural space” between Catholicism and Tamil cultural forms.42

Drawing on Mosse’s corrective, this dissertation offers a study of the space created by Hindi-language Christian literature between Hindi “culture” in central India and Protestant Christianity in the region. It does not seek to ask whether such literature is in continuity or discontinuity with its surrounding culture and religious history. It seeks rather to interrogate the complex ways in which Hindi Christians have created credible and recognizable linguistic features that have gradually evolved and that function in a religious milieu that is affected by Christian practices and Hindi cultural forms. This study is not a search for distinctiveness and, in this dissertation, I do not make any claims that the type of Christian witness I have identified in Hindi Christian literature – credible, recognizable, and public – is distinctive or unique to Hindi Christian literature when compared to other forms of discourses on Christian witness.43 Such claims are

43. After all, a few key questions that arise when claims of distinctiveness are made are, distinctive how? And, in the context of what? If the claim regarding Hindi Christian ideas is that some of them are distinct from Hindu ideas, then, yes, notions like *dehaadharaṇ* in Hindi Christianity constitute a distinctive claim from Hindu ones
not under study here. The dissertation is, rather, a study of the particular ways in which Hindi and Christianity continue to function in modern India. This is partly in response to Mosse’s critique (to which I alluded above) that most scholarship on Indian Christianity has sought to either find a gap between ‘local’ culture and Christian claims or to suggest they are undistinguishable. Mosse’s research on Tamil Catholics did not support this division; and, he therefore invites scholars of Indian Christianity to take a deeper look at these relations. My work accepts Mosse’s invitation.

I look at the relation between a language and certain religious ideas (Mosse has a different framework). And, in line with Mosse’s findings, my work shows that, in the case of Hindi Christian literature, claiming distinctiveness or denying it are both weak positions. In this literature, we rather find evidence for both approaches. So, for instance, in the debate around using the terms avātār or dehādhāraṇ to communicate Christ’s incarnation (discussed in chapter three), Hindi Christian authors chose the latter neologism as a way to be conceptually different from Hindu ideas and Brahmanic Indian Christianity (where avātār was accepted). They sought a recognizably Christian idea that would represent claims concerning the incarnation in ways that were credibly Christian – e.g., dehādhāraṇ, unlike avātār, did not dilute the unique work of

(though other Indian Christians have also sought to distinguish incarnation from avātār). A term like dehādhāraṇ, further, does not exist in isolation but is complemented by a general comfort with polytradition words that softens the boundaries between Christian and Hindu vocabularies (more on this below). In addition to such substantive issues, there is also a methodological issue at play. If one seeks to examine whether Hindi Christian ideas are distinct from other forms of Indian Christian thought, whether Protestant or Catholic or Orthodox, or from Protestant Christian thought outside India, say in the West, then comparative studies would be needed to examine the evidence from Hindi Christian literature in the context in which the matter of distinctiveness is raised. Are other Indian Christians saying and writing similar things? Are other Christians writing in Hindi doing similar things? How does Hindi Christian literature compare with Western Protestant thought and methods? A study of distinctiveness is, broadly speaking, a comparative quest. This dissertation does not investigate how its central idea – that Hindi Christian literature contains a persistent attention to a particular type of Christian witness that seeks to be credible, recognizable, and public – compares to other discourses on Christian witness. To claim or deny that the Christian witness I have identified is distinctive to Hindi Christian literature in a way that sets it apart from other Christian literature is neither necessary to make my case – that a certain type of Christian witness permeates Hindi Christian texts – nor the subject of this dissertation.
Christ when compared to Hindu claims. Yet, the preference for dehādhāraṇ (prevalent in Hindi Bible translations and mainline hymns) exists along with the acceptance of polytradition words (more prevalent in popular hymns and poetry) that aim to create familiarity across religious traditions.

As I further show in chapter four when discussing the fate of Bāibal kī Kahāniyāṁ (“Stories of the Bible”), a short-lived Hindi-language Christian television program, Hindi Christian authors have challenged attempts in the public media to separate Christianity from Hindi. They have opposed attempts to distance Christianity from Hindi in response to nineteenth- and twentieth-century attempts to align Christianity with “foreign” languages like Urdu and English (discussed below in chapter three). A study of the relation of Hindi to Christianity, and the results of my findings on Hindi Christian materials, reveal an interest in promoting a type of public witness that is recognizably Christian and locally grounded. So, in some instances, we find differentiating Christian features, like the neologism dehādhāraṇ. In other instances, we find assimilative tactics (e.g., when strongly affirming vernacular Christianities and readily deploying polytradition words). The Hindi Christian texts examined in this study are characterized by attempts both to be recognizably, and in some cases, credibly, Christian and to ‘blend in’ with its general religious and cultural context. As I will show, the texts I have studied support a complex picture of the interactions between Christian ideas and the ‘Hindi’ cultural world within which Hindi Christianity finds itself. To better understand these interactions, some framing comments on the broader context of Hindi Christian texts would be appropriate.
THE BROADER CONTEXT OF HINDI CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

An understanding of two aspects of the religious context of Hindi Christian literature particularly helps to delineate the broad contours of these materials and to recognize the ways in which Hindi Christian literature can be said to have developed a particular place for itself in the family of Indian Christian literature: the influence of bhakti in north and central India, and classical forms of Christian thought in India. Taken together, the relation of Hindi Christian literature to both bhakti and Indian Christian scholarship at large brings into relief some of the particular features of Hindi Christian literature.

Bhakti and Hindi Christian Literature: Shared Motifs

In Religions in Practice, John R. Bowen describes a private pujā (ritual offering) in a village in Madhya Pradesh. A father gathers his family, lights a cow-dung cake, sprinkles water around it, and offers portions of prepared food to the fire. The act of offering a part purifies the whole. The remaining food – now blessed food (prasād) – is then shared in a family meal.44 Family rites and public festivals permeate the religious landscape of central India. Accompanied by chants, prayers, and bhajans, bhakti and pujā resound through the many villages, towns, and cities in the region. Growing up in Madhya Pradesh, I woke up most days to the bell sounds and bhajans from the nearby temple. Once in a while an azān (the Muslim call to prayer) would sound through from the mosque across town. Festival plays, street theaters, religious holidays all combine to color the landscape with a religious hue. Bhakti, of many gods and in many forms,

44. Bowen, Religions in Practice, 125.
has shaped and continues to shape the Indian landscape. Ganesh, Hanuman, Krishna, Lakshman, Lakshmi, Ram, Saraswati, and Sita (listed alphabetically) are not only the names of divinities in central and north India. They all also adorn temples, books, factory floors, shops, schools, hospitals, government offices, calendars, posters, clothes, and bodies. The image of God, in Diana Eck’s apt phrase, is “visible everywhere in India.” If bhakti is the language of outreach, devotion or śraddhā and worship or pujā are the means of reaching out to God.

Bhakti is both a religious language with a set of practices and a particular way of being. In the former sense, I mean the various ways in which one is a devotee of, and in relationship with, God. These relations are generally reciprocal. One prays and worships when in specific need and when celebrating the divine in public festivals. Devotees worship, bring gifts, and go on pilgrimages. The deities protect, grant wishes, and help manage the ups and downs of life. In the latter sense, I mean the specific study of poets and religious communities in India like the bhakti poets of north India or the Khrist Bhaktas of Banaras (San Chirico). Here one studies particular groups and their ways of being. I use bhakti in the former and broader sense to refer to the general relationship formed between a devotee and the divine.

The relationship between a bhakt and her god(s) is personal, reciprocal, continual, and broadly exclusive. It constitutes a deep, individual relationship between a devotee and her god(s). It is reciprocal: the devotee offers praise, worship, and gifts (prasād) and receives blessings. It is continual: a devotee may not visit a temple or pray ritually every day, but the relationship is a constant presence in the thoughts and acts of the devotee. She expects that the divine sees the

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45. Hawley’s observation 30 years ago is apt today: “north India [is] a place where bhakti is spoken.” Hawley and Juergensmeyer, Songs of the Saints, 7.
46. Eck, Darśan, 16.
devotee whenever the divine is called upon. Finally, *bhakti* tends to be broadly exclusive. A devotee may pray to different deities at different times, but *bhakti* is usually layered, with one supreme deity the focus of devotion and a range of ‘secondary’ deities available as needed. While a *bhakt* can be in relationship with multiple divines for specific purposes – e.g., Ganesh for good luck, Lakshmi for wealth, Saraswati for wealth, Hanuman for protection – a particular divinity usually occupies the devotee’s devotion. It is in the context of this larger, four-fold sense of *bhakti* that Hindi Christian literature can be better understood.

While the place of *bhakti* in the Hindi areas is evident, the case to study Hindi Christian literature in conjunction with *bhakti* is less apparent at first glance. My research, for instance, has not found substantive, direct references in Hindi-language Christian literature to the works and ideas of the *bhakti* saints of north India (Ravidas, Kabir, Nanak, Surdas, Mirabai, and Tulsidas). Yet, the case to study Hindi Christianity with an eye toward *bhakti* motifs is valid for two important reasons. First, as I show below, Hindi Christian ideas and devotionals, especially Hindi Christian hymns, demonstrate a robust affinity to *bhakti* motifs. While it is my sense that a Hindi Christian would not generally consider Christianity a *bhakti* religion, evidence from Hindi Christian literature and practices strongly suggests thematic analogies between these ways of being religious.

Second, the fluid nature of religious borders in Hindi Christianity necessitates attention to the impact of *bhakti* as a religious phenomenon on the idioms and practices of Hindi Christians. Devotionals provide the most fertile ground for such an investigation.47 In sharing motifs with

47. All numerical references in square brackets [ ] refer to Hymn numbers in Ārādhānā ke Gīt. Translations of the Hindi hymns into English (noted where not mine) account for melody, context, and intent; as a result, in some
bhakti, Hindi Christian hymns join similar engagements in other parts of north and south India.\(^{48}\)

A recurring theme in popular Hindi Christian hymns, for instance, recalls sacrifice and surrender. A devotee brings herself to Christ, surrenders, seeks, shelter, and receives freedom or *mukti* from time and death. Consider these examples:

(A.; original Hindi, anonymous author and composer)

\[\textit{Dil merā le le, pyāre yīśu,} \]
\[\textit{tūne ise banāyā hai,} \]
\[\textit{ismeṁ tu apnā ghar banā le,} \]
\[\textit{jiske liye hī yah banāyā hai. (chorus)} \]

\[\textit{…} \]

\[\textit{Pavitr ātmā kā yeh ho bhavan,} \]
\[\textit{agni ke baptismā se,} \]
\[\textit{har jagah, har samay dūṁ gavāhī,} \]
\[\textit{jaisā yeh usne sikhāyā hai. (verse)} \]

(B.; original Hindi, lyrics and tune by Premdas)

\[\textit{Yīśu tu ne kiyā nihāl, jab maiṁ śaraṇ meṁ terī āyā. (chorus)} \]

Jesus, you freed me, when I came under your refuge.

\[\textit{Yīśu ākar tere dwār, barkat pāī beśumār,} \]
\[\textit{kripā terī huī apār, mere dil kā mail miṭāyā. (verse)} \]

Jesus, having reached your door, countless blessings I received,
Your mercy was unbound, as it cleaned my dirty heart.

\[\textit{…} \]

\[\textit{Jo terī śaraṇ meṁ āe, vah pāpoṁ se bac jāye,} \]
\[\textit{man meṁ pāvan ātmā āe, isko maiṁne hai ājmāyā.(verse)} \]

cases they are not literal translations. For instance, in hymn #47 below, *bolo* literally means ‘say’ (imperative) though in context it is better translated as ‘sing’ or ‘shout,’ as in ‘shout ‘praise’’ rather than ‘say ‘praise’.’

\(^{48}\) For an analysis of the interplay of *bhakti* motifs and social hierarchies in Tamil Christian hymns, see Hephzibah Israel, *Religious Transactions in Colonial South India* (2011). Her work on Tamil hymns is also summarized in a 2014 article, “Authority, Patronage and Customary Practices: Protestant Devotion and the Development of the Tamil Hymn in Colonial South India” in Bauman and Young, *Constructing Indian Christianities*.

\(^{49}\) ‘Holy Spirit’ is the typical Hindi Christian translation of *pavitr ātmā*.
He who comes to your refuge, from his sins he is saved,\(^{50}\)
He receives the Holy Spirit, in this witness I have shared.

_Hai dās terā viśvāsī, kāṭī tūne kāl kī phāṁsī,
dhan-dhan amar lok ke vāsī, darśan maiṁne terā pāyā._ (verse)

Your believer is a servant, you have cut the noose of time,
Blessed-blessed those in heaven, your vision I have received. [#282]

In other Hindi hymns, devotees beseech Christ to receive devotion and keep them close:

_(C.: original Hindi, anonymous author and composer)_

_Bolo jay mil kar jay_  
_bolo jay yiśu kī jay._  
_Bolo jay, jay, jay._ (chorus)

_Sing his praise, join his praise_  
_sing his praise Jesus’ praise._  
_Sing his praise, praise, praise._

_Prem tere kī yahī rīt:_  
_Man mein bhar de terī prīt,_  
_tere prem ke gāyeṁ gīt._ (verse)

_Tis’ the nature of your love:_  
_Fills one’s heart with your love,_  
_we sing songs of your love._

...  
...

_Khidmat apnī le mujh se,_  
_is mandir mein tū hī base,_  
_jag me terā nām phaile._ (verse)

_Take from me your service [Lord]_  
_in this temple may you stay,_  
_may the world hear your name._ [#47]

In other instances, Christian hymns recall the lovers’ relationship that exists between Christ and
his _bhakt_, a two-way relationship in which a devotee surrenders to Christ and is at the receiving
end of Christ’s love. “You are in love with me,” the German original in Hindi reads.

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\(^{50}\) In the context of _bhakti_ specifically and of Hindi religious vocabulary in general, _pāp_ refers to sin, evil, wickedness, or a wrong (McGregor, *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*, 623). In _bhakti_, one turns to God to seek liberation from the effects of sin, which are generally understood as forms of self-attachment, mistaken desires, or evil acts. The effects of such evil and sin can keep one bound to life and the cycle of rebirths. As a describer of sin and evil, the word _pāp_ – along with its antonym _puṇy_ (meritorious, auspicious) – functions in both Christian and Hindu circles.
(D.; original German, lyrics by Gerhard Tersteegen, tune by Dimitri Bortniansky, Hindi translator not specified)

Maim prem apār ko nit sarāhtā
jo yīśu tujh se prakaṭ hai,
aur apne ko samarpit kartā
tujh ko jo merā premī hai. (chorus)

I always praise the love unbound
that appears from you, O Lord,
and I surrender myself
to you who’s my lover [Lord]

Tū mujhse kaisī prītī rakhtā!
Man terā mujhko căhtā hai.
Is prem se sab prabhāvit hotā
vah jo kuch mere bhītar hai.
He prem asēm jo swarg se āyā
maim terā hūṁ, tū mujh ko bhāyā.(verse)

How it is that you love me!
You are in love with me.
This love changes everything
that which is inside of me.
O love unbound who came from heaven
I am yours and in love with you. [#7]

The form of lovers’ relation captured by Hymn #7 does not, however, exist in a vacuum. It, rather, complements communal forms of worship, even if the motivations for communality may also take other social and political forms. The relationship of bhakt communities to the singer saints of India, for instance, is complicated. Nirguna bhakti, Hawley and Juergensmeyer note, is not readily hospitable to institutions, temples, priests, and structures. The resistance of nirguna poets to organized religion typified in the poetry of Kabir was particularly attractive to those seeking to escape structures of caste and creed. 51 Kabir’s critique of Hinduism and Islam on the one hand and his relationship with a community of listeners and yogis who rejected Hindu hierarchies on the other, however, reflects the very concrete ways in which society and politics impact religious practices.

Christian devotion is also imprinted with a Christological core that is understandably embedded in Hindi hymns. As one consequence of this imprint, Protestant Christian Hindi hymns are clearly not devotionally ‘layered,’ with primary and secondary deities, when compared to

51. Hawley and Juergensmeyer, Songs of the Saints, 42-45.
analogous bhakti bhajans. While local healers and saints do figure in devotional schemes, Hindi-speaking Christians praise and worship in exclusive devotion to Jesus Christ. As yet another consequence, the Christological core has led to the predominance of saguna forms of bhakti rather than nirguna forms in the corpus of Hindi devotionals. Yet, key features of bhakti in both nirguna and saguna forms – longing, refuge, love, and surrender – are part of some of the most well-known Hindi Christian hymns. In both forms of bhakti, for instance, one finds engaged communities brought together by shared worship and social beliefs. A similar interplay of personal and communal in Christian hymns is readily evident in the ease with which some of the hymns move fluidly between first person singular and first person plural references.

(E.: original German, lyrics by Heinrich Held, tune by Jean Rousseau, Hindi translator not specified)

\begin{verbatim}
Man mein ho teri hi sakshi
  ki ham isvar ki santan.
Takem tuhi ko prati ksan,
  dukh mein rahein dhairyavan.
Tujh se jo bhi taan milti
  meri us se hai bhalai. (verse)
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
In us may there be your witness
  that we are children of God.
Watch for you at every moment,
  [and] in sorrow be steadfast.
And whenever you chastise me
  may I benefit from that. [#202]
\end{verbatim}

Communality has also meant an appreciation of the transmission and growth of faith through generations. As is reflected, for instance, in the Kabir panth’s transmission of faith and worship from gurus to disciples, or in the value placed in Mira’s songs in “sharing the company of other worshippers,” the Christian community on earth is inspired by and seeks to emulate the community of saints in heaven. In the words of a famous Hindi hymn:

\begin{verbatim}
52. Nirguna forms of bhakti direct devotion to the ultimate being conceived as without qualities, form, or attributes (from nir-guna, without qualities or attributes); saguna bhakti is directed to the ultimate being conceived as having attributes or form (from sa-guna, with qualities or attributes).
53. Hawley and Juergensmeyer, Songs of the Saints, 44-47.
54. Hawley and Juergensmeyer, Songs of the Saints, 129.
\end{verbatim}
We give thanks to you always Jesus Christ, we bow our heads before you, to worship you [and sing your praise] we gather in your temple.

Give thanks for the brave ones of this church those who martyred in your name, taking on their valor and sacrifice we keep on moving [boldly] ahead.

Themes in Protestant Hindi Christian hymns that are analogous to those in bhakti traditions, then, include: a strong personal bond between God and devotee, a two-way relationship with mutual obligations, personal devotion in the context of and as part of larger communities of worship, and a certain exclusivity in a devotee’s focus on a supreme deity who meets her need for love and salvation.

Hindi hymns, however, are not the only points of contact between the worlds of Protestant Christianity and Hindu bhakti. Poems provide another insight into these matters. Ravidas writes:

“A family that has a true follower of the Lord/ Is neither high caste nor low caste, lordly or poor./ As the lotus leaf floats above the water, Ravidas says,/ so he flowers above the world of his birth.”

Or, Kabir argues: “Pundit, so well-read, go ask God/ who his teacher is/ and who he’s taught./ He alone knows what shape he has/ and he keeps it to himself,/ alone.”

The transcendence of God is a central feature of nirguna bhakti. The divine transcends human idols, temples, castes, and institutions. The regular appearance of notions like sacrifice, reciprocity, surrender, and longing in Hindi Christian devotionals and poems provides evidence for the fact

55. Hawley and Juergensmeyer, Songs of the Saints, 25.
56. Hawley and Juergensmeyer, Songs of the Saints, 57.
that many motifs available in the devotional and religious literature of north India, especially in *saguna* forms of *bhakti*, have found their place in Hindi Christian literature.

*Indian Christian Scholarship and Hindi Christian literature: Not Partners*

The Indian subcontinent has a long history of Christian scholarship and this history can be traced to India’s earliest Christian communities in the first century C.E. Early trade routes and later colonial expansions brought “Indian” converts in contact with Christian communities outside the subcontinent. Hindi Christian literature exists as part of this rich Christian milieu in the subcontinent. However, Indian Christian scholarship has rarely, it seems, interacted with Hindi Christian materials. While the influence of Western authors on Hindi Christian writers is evident, Hindi Christian writers have for the most part ignored Indian Christian scholarship and ideas in other languages. Hindi Christian writers may have engaged their Western predecessors but a study of Hindi Christian materials reveals that Indian Christian scholarship in other languages has not been an influential partner of Hindi Christian writing in the way Western scholarship has been.

Hindi Christian authors engage Western scholarship and present them, usually, in the form of “survey reports” (in textbooks for seminaries) or as foils against which Hindi Christian writers clarify their claims; however, even though many Hindi Christian scholars can read and write in English, the ones who do so have minimally engaged scholars and texts that would be recognized as key figures and texts of Indian Christian theology. The reasons for this lack of serious

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57. For example, a cursory look at the bibliography of Dayal’s systematic theology (2005) shows that in a list of 74 books only 11 are by Indian authors – the other authors are from the West – including works by D. M.
engagement between Hindi Christian texts and Indian Christian writings are complex and many. Is this distance due to a lack of awareness on the part of Hindi writers about the wide variety of available Indian Christian materials, a lack that might itself be a function of the limited access of Hindi scholars to non-Hindi sources that are not available to them in accessible translations like those in Hindi?

The question of available translations provides a particularly interesting prism to examine the issue of engagement. A survey of available Hindi translations reveals that a deciding factor in which works get translated and which get left behind is, not surprisingly, the perceived relevance of a work’s subject matter. On the one hand, though many Christian hymns, sermons, Bible-studies, and guides or handbooks have been translated into Hindi, the works of M. M. Thomas or Stanley Samartha or Soares Prabhu or Aruna Gnanadason have not yet garnered such attention. On the other hand, many books of James Massey, who writes in English and Punjabi on Dalit issues, have been translated. Similarly, institutions focused on evangelizing India are translating evangelism- and mission-related works into Hindi. 58 Explanations that draw on matters concerning Hindi translations and access provide only a partial picture. As we will see below, other issues are equally and powerfully play.

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58 http://www.ntcdoon.org/history.html. Tennent (http://www.asburyseminary.edu/president) works closely with the New Theological College in Dehra Dun and is a visiting faculty there. Tennent has translated books on theology, ecumenism, mission, and conversion into Hindi (http://www.ntcdoon.org/publica.html).
Consider, for instance, the case of Indian Christian theology’s relation with Hindi Christian scholarship. Missionary theologians like Robin Boyd, William Barclay, and John Webster, for instance, knew of theological materials in Indian Christian theology and found in Indian Christian theology a familiarity with their own ideas and vocabulary. In the minds of these scholars, this sense of familiarity created the impression that Indian Christian theologies were vernacular expressions of old-home concepts. Boyd’s lament, in his 1969 dissertation on Indian Christian theology, captured the conventional wisdom of the day:

There is no doubt that to an outside observer the Church in India seems to be dominated by western attitudes and modes of thought. In church architecture, church organisation, church services, church music and church publications, western forms and attitudes still seem to predominate. … Again, the teaching given in theological colleges throughout India has been, and still is, dominated by western theology, as a glance at any syllabus will show. The result is that the preaching of the average Indian minister or evangelist reflects the western theological categories in which he has been trained.  

Western clothing (figuratively and literally), however, was not the whole make-up of Indian Christianity. Early Indian Christian theology was heavily influenced also by Sanskrit texts and those who studied them because many of the pioneers of Christian theology in India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were upper-caste converts from Hinduism or were Hindu reformers like Krishna Mohan Banerjee (1813-1885), Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922), Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (1861-1907), Keshub Chandra Sen (1838-1884), and A. S. Appasamy (1848-1926). Their influence led to what Arvind Nirmal has called a Brahmanic turn in Indian Christian theology. The influence of Sanskrit and the Vedas was not new to

60. “Broadly speaking, Indian Christian theology in the past has tried to work out its theological systems in terms of either advaita Vedanta or vishishta advaita. Most of the contributions of Indian Christian theology in the past came from caste converts to Christianity. The result has been that Indian Christian theology has perpetuated within itself what I prefer to call the ‘Brahmanic’ tradition...To speak in terms of traditional Indian categories, Indian Christian theology, following the Brahmanic tradition, has trodden the jnana marga, the bhakti marga and the karma marga. In Brahma Bandhav Upadhyay, we have a brilliant theologian who attempted a synthesis of Sankara’s Advaita Vedanta with Christian theology. In Bishop A.J. Appasamy, we have a bhakti marga theologian who tried to synthesize Ramanuja’s *Yashishta Advaita* with Christian Theology. In M.M. Thomas we have a
nineteenth and twentieth century theologies. The Italian missionary Roberto De Nobili (1577-1656) learned Tamil and Sanskrit, adopted the life of a sanyāsi, tried to establish a seminary with Sanskrit as the medium of instruction, and experimented with Sanskrit as a liturgical language in the church.  

According to the dominant story of Indian Christian theology, exemplified and influenced by Boyd’s account, early Indian Christian theology exhibited two strands of thought. It tried to localize its European missionary heritage and it tried to ground its claims in Hindu ideas. It is then not surprising that evaluations of early Indian Christian theology have found fault with it in both its Westernized and its Sanskritic form and content.

Hindi-language Protestant theology is not Brahmanic and Vedantic in nature. This may be due to the fact that most Christian converts in the Hindi-speaking areas are Dalits, tribal, or farmers. Most contemporary Hindi-using Christians are a mix of middle-caste converts and people from the lower and middle levels of economic class. It is also the case that, unlike early Indian Christian theologies, Hindi theologies draw frequently from the testimonies and experiences of Christians who did not come from upper caste and class backgrounds and were not invested in

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Hindu scriptures and theology. As a result, Hindi Christian literature reflects a general distaste for Sanskritic ideas and idioms.

Another feature of Hindi Christian literature is its self-conscious commitment to be embedded in particular congregational and practical issues. In comparison, Hindu converts and Hindu reformers wanted to borrow Christian interpretations of general ideals like love, equality, and grace for their reform agendas or they wanted to show how Christian claims could mimic Hindu ideas. Despite the differences between Hindi theologies and early Indian Christian theologies, more recent Indian Christian theologies from the early- and mid-twentieth century onward clearly possess interests that are also shared by Hindi theologies. This is especially true of their shared interest in social change and in engaging other faiths without borrowing wholesale their language and claims.

M. M. Thomas, V. S. Azariah, and Paul D. Devanandan spoke for many Christians in newly-Independent India when they invited church communities to dedicate themselves to nation building, interfaith harmony, and close alliances with civil society. S. J. Samartha (1920-2001), George M. Soares Prabhu (1929-1995), Dhyanchand Carr (1938- ), Renthy Keitzar (1936-2000), Aruna Gnanadason (1949- ), Monica Jyotsna Melanchthon (1962- ), and James Massey (1943- ), among others, have produced works that address the needs of church and society, tribal issues, inter-religious dialogue, gender empowerment, ecumenism, Dalit rights, and ecological care.63

Both these aspects of the relationship between Indian Christian theology and Hindi Christian scholarship – the discomfort with presenting Christian ideas in Hindu terms and the preference
for Christian practice over conceptual frameworks – are captured in the story one can tell about Hindi Christian assessments of the very term “Indian Christian theology.” This is an account of two editorial remarks and the books they preface: C.W. David’s translation of Boyd’s *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* in 1976 and C.W. David’s introduction of Benjamin Khan’s *Bīsvīṁ Śatābdī ke Pramukh Dharmāvijñānī* (“Major Christian Theologians of the Twentieth Century”) published in 1990. At the time of these writings, David was the editor-in-chief of the Hindi Theological Literature Committee, Khan a prominent Hindi Christian author, and Boyd a well-respected scholar of Christianity in India. In other words, the debate on the term “Indian Christian theology” that can be found among them provides valuable clues concerning the importance with which the “Indianness” of Christian theology was debated among prominent participants in Hindi Christian scholarship.

David sparked the conversation when he decided to change the title of the Hindi version of Boyd’s book to “Christian theology in India” instead of maintaining Boyd’s original “An Introduction to Indian Christian theology.” Explaining his decision, David wrote: “There can be no such thing as Indian Christian theology” because “Christ is universal, beyond every nation.”

That Christ was universal, however, was not the only argument against describing Boyd’s book as a study of *Indian* Christian theology rather than as a study of Christian theology *in India*. David preferred a particular aspect of Boyd’s presentation of Indian Christian theology that seemed to move him away from presenting Boyd’s work to his Hindi readers as a study of works representative of what was Indian about Indian Christian theology.

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Boyd’s work broadly presents a two-sided account of his subject matter. On the one hand, the study is dominated by Christian scholars in India who have engaged and found as their primary partner for theological discourse Hindu concepts and Hindu worldviews. This gave the impression that Indian Christian theology was Hindu Christian theology (and, as we shall later see, Khan makes this interpretation his point of departure). On the other hand, Boyd tried to introduce Indian Christian theology as the “search for truth,” or, in the artful Hindi translation, ‘saty ke sāth ulajhnā’ (“to tangle with truth”), where the truth is Christ. Further, to tangle with truth was at the heart of “true religious enquiry.” Finally, and this is where Boyd seemed to give a meaning to the descriptor ‘Indian’ that did not mean ‘Hindu,’ he reminded his readers that tangling with truth was a local (and not a foreign) concept for the Indian tradition.\textsuperscript{65} What could make Indian Christian theology Indian was, then, this commitment to tangle with the truth that is Christ. In this second account, the task was not to make Christianity a version of the Hindu worldview but to use the Bible to present the truth of Christ in the context of one’s environment. Indian Christian theology must witness to Christ by promoting Christian behavior and must not get sidetracked by philosophical investigations, conforming to Hindu thoughts, or (merely) translating Western works.\textsuperscript{66}

In his remarks, David points to the second account by Boyd and argues that it is this element of being Indian – as a conduct-based, witness-giving, and truth-entangling theology – that he would

\textsuperscript{65} Boyd, Bhārat meṁ Masīhī Dharmāvijñān, 162: “To tangle with truth, which is the demand of true religious enquiry, is not a foreign idea for the Indian tradition.” (Saty ke sāth ulajhnā, jo sacī dharmāsaiddhāntikī kī māṁg hai, bhārātīy paramparā ke liye videśī bāt nahīṁ hai.)

\textsuperscript{66} As the Hindi translation reads, in close conformity to the original English (Boyd, Bhārat meṁ Masīhī Dharmāvijñān, 163): “In India today there is the need for a conduct-based, witness-giving theology…. It seems that before becoming the congregation’s systematic theology or Indian doctrines it is important to tangle with the Christian revelation and biblical witness in order to understand their internal meaning and structure.” (Bhārat meṁ āj vyāvāhārik, sākṣī dene vāle dharmāvijñān kī āvaśyakātā hai….Esā pratiḥ hotā hai ki kalisiyā kā vyavāvastit dharmāvijñān athāvā bhārāty viśvāskathan banne ke pahe ke yāvaśyak hai ki khrisiṭ prakāśan aur bāibalī sākṣy se uljhā jāe tāki unke āntārik arth aur āntārik saṃracānā ko samjhā jā sake.)
like to recommend to Hindi readers of Boyd’s account of Indian Christian theology. Boyd’s latter account, however, comes at the tail end of his study – in chapter thirteen of seventeen chapters – and as a consequence, it seems, David draws his readers’ attention to this second account and distinguishes between Christian theology in Hindu terms and Indian Christian theology by renaming Boyd’s work as ‘Christian theology in India.’

David’s hesitance with characterizing Boyd’s work as representative of Indian Christian theology to Hindi readers was picked up later on by Khan. Unlike Boyd’s work, Khan’s work is an introduction to some of the major theological thinkers of the twentieth century that is written in Hindi in order to make the history of Christian thought accessible to those who primarily use Hindi. The book is targeted at a broad range of Hindi-users: students of theology, pastors and Christian educators, Christian thinkers, and general, interested learners. It is, therefore, a presentation of (English-language) Western works to a Hindi-speaking audience. Khan’s claim, then, unlike Boyd’s, is not that his work is Indian but rather that he has tried to present Western ideas in Hindi. Khan recognizes the challenges posed by translating concepts for a broad audience into a different language. The challenge is dual: simplifying technical theological

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67. David’s preface in Boyd, Bhārat meṁ Masīhī Dharmāvijñān, ix: “The author has provided a ‘definition of Indian Christian theology’ in the thirteenth chapter of the book. We accept ‘Indian Christian theology’ in that sense.” (Lekhak ne pustak ke terhāveṁ addhyāy meṁ ‘bhārătīy khristīy dharmāvijñān kī paribhāṣā’ dī hai. Us arth meṁ ham ‘bhārătīy khristīy dharmāvijñān’ ko svīkār karte haiṁ.)

68. Khan, Bīsvīṁ Śatābdī ke Pramukh Dharmāvijñānī, xi: “Many readers who go to seminary to study religion are maybe not competent enough in English to fully understand those books on Christian-literature that are written in English. In the same way, an average Christian also remains ignorant about schools of thought in Christian literature beyond the Bible because he does not have available in the mother tongue any book whose study allows him to learn about the primary schools of thought in Christian theology. I have been feeling this void for a very long time.” (Bahut se pāṭhak jo semānarī meṁ dharm adhyayan ke liye jāte haiṁ ve śāyad angrezī bhāṣā meṁ itne nipun nahīṁ hote ki masīhī-sāhity par angrezī meṁ likhī pustakoṁ kā pūrī samajh ke sāth adhyayan kar sakeṁ. Isī prakār sādharan masīhī bhī bāībal ke atirikt any masīhī sāhity kī vicārdhārāoṁ se anabhiṁ rahte haiṁ ki kyoṁki use māṭbhaṣā meṁ koī eisī pustak upālabd hiṁ jis ke adhyayan se vah masīhī dharmāvijñān kī pramukh vicārdhārāoṁ ko padh sake. Is riktātā ko main kāfī lambe samay se mahāsūs kar rahā thā.)
language, and translating it into Hindi. David recognizes this challenge and asks his readers to understand the context of the theologies that Khan presents.

This attention to context, however, also allows David to invite his readers to take the task a step further, i.e., to find new ways to present Christian theology in terms of India’s context. He writes, may this book “also inspire [its readers] to think anew in the cultural context of India and to present Christian theology in terms of the religion and morality [literally “doctrine of conduct”] here.”

It is possible to read David’s call to think with the “religion and morality here” as a call to adopt the worldview of Hinduism or other faiths found in India but an understanding of David’s remarks on Boyd’s study caution us against such a reading.

For Khan, it is the task of “Indian theology” – a term Khan uses in Bīsvīṁ Śatābdī ke Pramukh Dharmāvijñānī in 1990 – to introduce the incarnated, risen Christ in a way that makes sense to the modern, developing world. In this task, Khan finds Boyd’s work lacking in its presentation of Indian (Christian) theology. Commenting on An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology Khan writes:

69. Khan writes (Bīsvīṁ Śatābdī ke Pramukh Dharmāvijñānī, xii): “As far as language in concerned, I have tried to present the thoughts in very simple language. But to the present the definitional (technical) proofs, used by the authors, in simple forms is not an easy task and not fully possible.” (Bhāṣā kā jahāṁ tak sambhandh hai, mainne vicāroṁ ko bahut saral bhāṣā mein vyakt karne kā prayāś kiyā hai. Parantu dharmāvijñān ke pāribhāṣik (taknīkī) pratyayōṁ kā, jinkā lekhākoṁ ne prayog kiyā hai, saralikaraṁ, karnā saral kāry nahīṁ hai aur pūrṇātayā sambhav nahīṁ hai.)

70. David’s preface in Khan, Bīsvīṁ Śatābdī ke Pramukh Dharmāvijñānī, ix: ... prerāṇā bhī prāpt hogī ki ve bhārat ke samāskrtik pariveś mein nayā cintan kareṁ aur yahāṁ ke dharm aur karnī siddhāntī kī vicār koṭiyōṁ men mārī dharmāvijñānī ko prastut bhī kareṁ.

71. Khan, Bīsvīṁ Śatābdī ke Pramukh Dharmāvijñānī, 211: “Jesus Christ is this Word of God who incarnated, who united humans with God in his life, death, and resurrection. Such a presentation of this Christ is necessary that can be acceptable to today’s human, who wants to be self-reliant on the basis of her intelligence and advances in science [literally, “new, new discoveries in science”] and who has attained maturity [literally, “ripeness,” “wide experience,” or “shrewdness”].” (Yah īśvar kā śabd yīśu masīh hai jo dehādhāri huā, jisne apne jīvan, mṛtyu aur punarutthān mein manuśy kā īśvar se milāp karāyā. Is masīh ka eisā prastutikaraṁ āvaśyak hai jo āj ke manuśy ko, jo apnī buddhi aur vijñān kī nā naī khojōṁ ko dvārā ātm nirbhar honā cāhtā hai aur paripakv avasthā ko prāpt kar cukā hai, māny ho.)
We have studied Boyd’s ‘Indian Christian theology.’ At the same time, some works and a book have also been published on Dalit theology. It is our humble belief that writing Indian Christian theology in English can only lead to the false use of Indian categories of thought.\textsuperscript{72} It is our hope that in the near future Indian scholars and thinkers will emerge who will write systematic theologies that could be truly called Christian theologies.\textsuperscript{73}

Khan’s assessment of Boyd’s work suggests that the lacunae identified may not necessarily be a function of Boyd’s selection of Indian theologians to study but of the paucity of Indian Christian theologians who have not sought to inculturate Christianity into Hindu religious worldviews. Khan also seems to note the impact of writing in English on Indian Christian theology. Khan does not explain this issue further and his comments raise many questions. Is it Khan’s belief that writing in English has made Indian Christian theologians more open to elite and upper-caste forms of theologizing, which share affinity with Brahmanic forms of Hindu thought? Khan’s reference to “Dalit theology” and his hope for “truly” Christian theologies seem to make such an inference possible. Is Khan faulting Boyd for including only English-language works in his study? Is Khan taking issue with the role of Hindu ideas as the primary interlocutors of Christian theology? Insufficient evidence in Bīsvīṁ Śatābdī ke Pramukh Dharmāvijñānī precludes clear answers. It is clear, however, that both David and Khan have found Boyd’s presentation Indian Christian theology problematic and this discomfort provides evidence for the fraught relationship between Indian Christian theologies and Hindi Christian scholarship.

\textsuperscript{72} This comment claims a rather harsh – and, it seems, hard to defend – schism between the English language and Indian thought.

\textsuperscript{73} Khan, Bīsvīṁ Śatābdī ke Pramukh Dharmāvijñānī, 213-14: Hamne bāuyaḍ ke granth ‘indiyān kriściyan thiyāudoloi’ kā adhyayan kiyā. Idhar dalit dharmāvijñānī par bhi kucch lekh aur ek pustak prakāśit huī hai. Hamārī vinamr mānyātā hai ki aṅgrezī meṁ bhārāṭīy khrisṭīy dharmāvijñānī likhne meṁ bhārāṭīy vicār koṭīyāni kā jāṭhā pratvog hī ho saktā hai. Hamārī āśā hai ki nikaṭ bhavisy meṁ bhārāṭīy vidvān evam cintak paidā homge jo vyavāsthit dharmāvijñān likhemge jise vāstav meṁ masīhī dharmāvijñān kahā jā sakegā.
This dissertation introduces and contextualizes Hindi Christian literature. It identifies and studies a persistent theme – a credible, recognizable, and public witness – across a variety of Hindi Christian materials. And, it provides an explanation for this theme through a study of Hindi Christian hymns, poems, guidebooks, and works on theology and ethics. To do so, it explores the historic and contemporary contexts for the emergence and shape of Hindi Christian materials. It charts the influence of missionary contributions, language choice (e.g., why write in Hindi?), and the socio-economic reality of Hindi Christians on the production and form of Hindi Christian literature. It examines translation decisions in Hindi Christian literature and sheds light on linguistic attempts to communicate a public Christian witness in particular ways. And, it explores the deployment of discipleship and public guides to form recognizable Christian identities.

In the chapters that follow, and drawing on the scope and contours sketched out above, this dissertation addresses two broad goals: it contributes to scholarly research on Christianity by (i) providing an introduction to Hindi Christian literature in modern India and (ii) examining the particular form of Christian witness or discipleship – credible, recognizable, and public – found in such literature. Given this dual nature, this dissertation balances an introductory survey with closer readings of certain ideas and authors that are relevant to explain the particular form of Hindi Christian witness in modern India. The dissertation, then, can be understood as comprising two complementary parts: introductory sections (chapters one and two) and analytical sections (chapters three, four, and five).
Chapter one introduces the topic, thesis, and purpose of the dissertation. It defines the scope of research and locates Hindi Christian literature in the larger context of bhakti motifs and pan-Indian Christian theology. An analysis of Hindi bhajans and hymns helps us recognize the many ways in which Hindi Christian literature and theology are embedded in the wider devotional milieu. Similarly, a comparative study of the features of Indian Christian theology in English and of Hindi literature helps us identify some of the particular features of Hindi Christian literature.

The second chapter offers a detailed presentation of some of the key sources, people, and themes in Hindi-language Christian literature. In the context of Hindi Christian materials, it explores key institutional sources (publishing houses, seminaries), influential authors, and recurring themes. As part of this analysis, it proposes a new framework to organize Hindi Christian materials. It also provides an introduction to soteriology in Hindi Christian literature and, through a careful survey of select sources, sheds light on the inseparable relationship between being saved and the (consequent) Christian responsibility to witness in public ways that Hindi Christian writings seek to construct.

The third chapter examines three foundational questions in the study of Hindi Christian literature: Why Hindi? Why translate? And, how have Christians in India used Hindi? Theological and political reasons are explored, in addition to the many ways in which the use of Hindi provided many of the adapted idioms and neologisms that have come to define the particular ways in which Hindi Christians have tried to distinguish their claims from those of their Hindu neighbors. 74 It examines why dehādhāraṇ came to represent a central Christian

74. For an excellent study of the translation of the Bible into Tamil, see Israel, Religious Transactions in Colonial South India.
concept in Hindi Christian writings. The near exclusive use of *dehādharāṇ* by Hindi Christian authors stands in clear contrast to the continued use of other options like *avātār* by other Indian Christian authors—and, as I will show, the choice of *dehādharāṇ* over *avātār* included a clear rebuke of arguments that the words were synonyms with conceptual parity. Chapter three will investigate this difference in light of larger debates on the use of Hindi as an important language of Christian communication in India.

The fourth chapter examines the formation of faith in the context of discipleship. Drawing from works on discipline and on the religious and political contexts in which religions develop, it explores the many lessons for the formation of faith and religious identity available to Hindi Christians in guidebooks and life manuals. For these texts, discipleship is a public task: it sends signals within the church and outside it. Hence, discipleship should attend to (its) public communication. On the one side, what do Christians communicate? On the other side, how are Christians perceived? These questions are explored in a study of Christian depictions in public media as found in the rise and demise of *Bāibal kī Kahāniyāṁ* (“Stories of the Bible”), a short-lived Christian serial broadcast on India’s national television. While translation choices (discussed in chapters one and three) represent linguistic attempts to create recognizable religious identities, a study of Hindi guidebooks reveals social attempts to establish, at least in theory, distinguishable and identifiable features of Hindi Christian life.

Chapter five attends to the public objectives of Hindi Christian materials and highlights three of them—interfaith relations, public engagement, and Christian discourse in pluralist India—through a close study of selected works by three prominent Hindi Christian authors: Benjamin
Khan, Din Dayal, and Richard Howell. I examine the ways in which these authors put Christian theology and ethics in the service of larger social goals and how their theological and/or ethical proposals seek a credible and recognizable Christian witness that is shaped by its need to exist and thrive publically in relation with the religious beliefs and practices of people of other faiths.

So, taken together, chapters three, four, and five present five case-studies of Hindi Christian thought that help us recognize the attention to a credible, recognizable, and public Christian witness that is a key feature of Hindi Christian thought. Chapter three examines the first case-study: Hindi Christian attitudes toward the propriety of using the term *avātār* to represent Christian claims concerning the incarnation of God. Chapter four presents three more case-studies: (i) Hindi Christian claims that the virtuous life of Christian discipleship is also a public statement, (ii) Hindi Christian assessments of the demise of *Bāibal kī Kahāniyāṁ*, a Christian T.V. drama (using its demise to promote Hindi as the language of Christianity in an attempt to negate the perception of Christianity in India as a ‘foreign’ religion), and (iii) Hindi Christian views on the social goals of good works. Finally, chapter five presents the fifth case-study in Hindi Christian thought: Hindi Christian commentary – in the works of Khan, Dayal, and Howell – on the public nature of the Christian witness it proposes in modern India.

The sixth and final chapter locates Hindi Christian ideas in the context of the social position of Hindi-speaking Indian Christians. It summarizes the findings of the study of Hindi Christian literature and, in doing so, sheds lights on the social purposes of religious lives as presented in these materials. It clarifies challenges and opportunities while exploring Hindi Christian
materials. Finally, it identifies and explores avenues for further research in the study of Hindi Christian literature.
Chapter Two

Hindi Christian Literature:

Sources and Themes
Hindi Christian literature is inflected with a missionary past and a marginal position. It possesses a lexicon and features specific to it even as it exists in relation with Indian Christian theology at-large and Hindu-Christian debates around conversion and Christian identity. To examine its past and present is to understand the complex forces that have generated the ethical core that infuses much of modern Hindi Christian literature.

This chapter identifies the broad contours of Hindi Christian literature by focusing themes and ideas important to it. What, if anything, should a Christian do to be saved? Does a belief in Christ and assurance in his saving work come with certain corresponding responsibilities on our part? I propose that Hindi Christian materials in general and theology in particular present personal ethics as a necessary response to grace. This aspect has led to particular developments. One such development is a soteriology that unfolds in three parts or events (discussed below) that can be properly regarded as a collaborative project between God’s salvific grace and Christian discipleship in service of a public witness.

In Christian discourse, the concept of theology in event-form has a considerable history. Prominent examples of theology-as-events include “biographies of God” as a God who is active and who loves, listens, speaks, offers mercy, saves, and sustains. From a Christian perspective, history-altering divine events also include the incarnation of the Word, Christ’s descent and resurrection, the Great Commission, and the gathering of the church. It has been used generally to identify and acknowledge the ways in which divine acts have shaped history and

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1. Song, *Jesus, the Crucified People*, 101-120.
3. Chung, *Public Theology in an Age of World Christianity*.
4. Ingle-Gillis, *The Trinity and Ecumenical Church Thought*. 
continue to shape it. I borrow this Christian use of theology-in-events to describe the activity of God and its effects on Christian life as presented in Hindi Christian literature. Such a lens allows us to see the role of human agency within the scheme of divine-human interactions that constitutes Christian soteriology in Hindi. God acts in grace and humans respond in discipleship – a schema familiar to Christian discourses. The interplay of these actors, and the effects of the gracious act of God on the corresponding response of believers, best characterize Hindi Christian literature.

In the first event, Christ dies for our sins, makes us right with God, and teaches us a particular way of being or ethic. This event happens on God’s initiative and in it God-in-Christ is the agent of action. In the second event, a person accepts Christ as a personal savior and in doing so self-commits to a particular way of living in the world. Primary agency here belongs to the believer.

In its third part, Christian Hindi literature insists that a Christian is responsible to act in ways commensurate with discipleship of Christ. This must be done, I show below, in order to present a coherent and credible Christian witness within the larger social context.

Hindi Christian literature does not claim that a failure of discipleship destroys or disrupts grace; God’s grace and love, it insists, cannot be undone. A rupture in discipleship, however, does considerable damage to Christian witness in society. Given the social goal of Hindi Christian literature – a credible social witness – these materials provide Hindi Christians with the resources they need to live faithfully.
In what follows, I locate Hindi Christian literature and identify its sources and present some themes and figures in Hindi Christian theology as an introduction to the soteriological model examined in the next chapter. Such an introduction is desirable given the scant exploration of Hindi Christian literature and theology in the academy of religion. Many a reader of these chapters will come upon something new in Hindi-language Christian materials. Chapters one and three map some of the linguistic, missionary, and social forces that have shaped the historical trajectory of Hindi Christian literature. Here I turn attention to Christian Hindi materials proper in the context of those forces. Who are some of the Hindi Christian writers and theologians of the past 50 years? What are they writing, preaching, and singing about? What are some of the key themes found in Hindi Christian materials and theology? What are the sources to sketch the social goals of Hindi Christian literature? These questions will guide this chapter.

**Sources of Hindi Christian Literature**

People produce Christian materials in Hindi for many reasons. Most of central and north Indian churches use Hindi. Pentecostal and evangelical churches, from where much new scholarship is emerging, work in Hindi-speaking areas. Hindi-speakers and Hindi-writers now lead national churches and seminaries. But congregations and church bodies that use Hindi constitute a small portion of churches in India. Though nearly 40% of Indians speak a form of Hindi, Christians constitute only around 3% of the national population. Among the more than 30 million Christians living in India, Hindi-speaking churches account for, in my estimate, less than a fourth

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5. As noted above (page 3, note 7), Hindi Christian communities routinely engage a variety of sources for Christian reflections – e.g., sermons, guidebooks, textbooks, poems, and hymns. Consequently, I have found them to be relevant to the community’s self-representation and, therefore, to this study.
of Indian Christians. Though a minority part of the Christian population of India, Hindi-using Christians have produced and continue to produce a steady stream of religious materials.6

In 2010, I asked the Hindi Theological Literature Committee, the premier publisher of Hindi Christian literature in modern India, to produce a comprehensive bibliography of Hindi Christian literature.7 The Committee compiled a list of 1181 books in a “Comprehensive Catalogue.” 8 Another such list of Hindi Christian literature was compiled in 1917 (itself an expanded version of a 1912 list) under the auspices of the Christian Literature Committee of the Uttar Pradesh and Mid-India Missionary Councils and the Allahabad-based North India Christian Tract and Book Society.

The list,9 “A Descriptive and Classified Catalogue of Hindi Christian Literature,” included publications up to 1917 and was accompanied by a “Report on Protestant Hindi Christian Literature” by the missionary Edwin Greaves. The Catalogue and the Report are available as part of a larger compilation of “Surveys and Reports of Christian Literature in India,” which includes lists of publications in Bengali, Tamil, Kannada, Punjabi, and Marathi, among other languages.


7. Based in the city of Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, H.T.L.C. is led by Rev. Dr. John H. Anand, who serves as the Committee’s Editor and Publisher. Anand is an ordained priest of the Church of North India. Born of a Muslim mother and a Hindu father, both of whom were Dalits, Anand converted to Christianity under the influence of an American Methodist missionary. Formally trained in Hindi literature and theology, Anand has approximately sixty books to his credit. He has served as Editorial Secretary of both the Indian Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge and the Bible Society of India and as professor at Satyaniketan Theological College. Anand has translated the New Hindi Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek for the Bible Society of India. He has also translated the Book of Worship of the Church of North India and The Ecumenical Hindi Pavitr Bāībil (Holy Bible).


Compared to the 1917 catalogue, the 2010 catalogue includes new sections on science, ethics, and the history of Christianity in South Asia. The 2010 catalogue is also markedly different in composition and tenor. Put together by missionary societies to enhance their work, the 1917 catalogue had sections on apologetics, motivational biographies of popular missionaries, information on mission fields, and books to help refute the claims of other religions. Reflecting a more general and multi-religious outlook, the 2010 catalogue has sections on religion, history of Christianity, ethics, social action, and interfaith relations. Common sections across both catalogues – on Bible, theology, devotion, and Christian education – further hint at issues and commitments that have spanned the century.

A more detailed numerical analysis, which is based on a general assessment of categories, provides additional insights. The 1917 catalogue lists 490 books across fourteen categories. The 2010 catalogue lists 1181 books across six categories. 383 books in the 2010 catalogue are listed under a “general” or unassigned category; so, 798 books are properly categorized and available for a detailed analysis. Between the two catalogues, then, the overall number of books increased by 141%. The proportion of theology books to categorized books doubled from approximately 11% to 22%. In the 1917 catalogue, a lonely one Indian author was listed among 32 authors in the theology section. By 2010, more than half the theologians listed were Indian (32 out of 56). Bible-related publications, consisting of translations, commentaries, Bible studies, and dictionaries, constituted the largest segment of each catalogue – 24% in 1917 and 32% in 2010. Books related to Christian ethics and advice were around 10% of the 2010 catalogue, though the proportion of Indian ethicists was high at 43% of all ethicists categorized in the catalogue.
Instructions on ethics and Christian living were important also to Christian authors in twentieth-century India. 75 advice books (15%) for Christian men, women, and children are listed under “social services” and “stories” in the 1917 list. The books include titles like Ābhuṣaṇ kā lobh (“the love of jewelry”), Gālī Denā (on using abusive language), Haridāsī, Ek Kahānī Madyapān ke Pariṇām ke Viṣay Mem (on the effects of drinking), Kristiy Mātā (“Christian mother,” advice on bringing up children), Kumār Śikṣā (on raising well-mannered boys), and Prakāśit Prabhā (illustrating the true faith). Though the percentage of ethics- and advice-related books in 1917 at 15% was nearly one and a half times the 2010 figure (10%), both lists catalogued a similar number of books (80 in 2010 and 75 in 1917). Further, despite considerable topical convergence, the theological and ethical sections of the lists reveal minimal overlapping records. In the case of advice books in these two catalogues, no records overlap. In other words, each entry is unique.

Differences and similarities between the 1917 and 2010 lists reveal foci that have shifted over time and others that have remained stable through the 93 years between the two catalogues. Sections on religion, Bible, Christian history, theology, and ethics frame both catalogues. Both also serve an educational purpose when they present collections of biblical books, biographies, Bible studies, hymnbooks, textbooks, and critical essays. They make available resources to a wide range of readers: parents, converts, theologians, ethicists, liturgists, hymnists, historians, administrators, and those generally interested in Christianity. They provide concrete examples of ethical living, Christian living, holiness, and identity through biographies, stories, advice books, and life ‘manuals.’ Finally, comparing the two catalogues also allows us to identify thematic shifts and trajectories in the production of Hindi Christian literature.
The latest catalogue is by most measures a comprehensive account of Hindi Christian literature. It codifies, however, only part of the body of that literature because it is focused on book-length works that are academic in nature and published by traditional mainline church-related publishing houses, like the Indian Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, the Hindi Theological Literature Committee, the Christian Literature Society, and Lucknow Publishing House (a unit of the Methodist Church in India). Book-length works, however, need not be the sole or the standard repositories of theological creativity.

The catalogue neglects published hymn books, sermon anthologies, testimonials, and the many conversion accounts that are popular in Christian communities that use Hindi. Further, it ignores audio and video products like songs, music videos, audio CDs, and short- and full-length feature films that communicate theological ideas to Christian communities in cities, towns, and villages. Finally, it does not account for “informally” published materials, i.e., materials self-published by authors, independent missions, research centers, and evangelical groups. Put differently, it does not record the output of non-mainline publishers. In summary, the catalogue neglects a lot of non-mainline Hindi material.

In light of these lacunae, it is more accurate to characterize H.T.L.C.’s catalogue as a comprehensive snapshot in history of academy-oriented and “formally” published Hindi materials. It does not adequately cover the wide range of theological materials available to Christian communities that use Hindi as their primary language. Though the 2010 list is the best available catalogue of Hindi Christian literature, and is therefore a valuable resource for research
on the subject, it need not, or maybe even should not, be an exclusive research source, given the myriad forms in which Hindi Christian materials can be found.

On the one hand, sources to study Indian Christian ideas are readily available and well-known to a researcher. Christian literature from India has been codified in many places. They are available through the archives of the British colonial administration. They are available in the libraries of ecumenical groups like the National Council of Churches in India, the Christian Conference of Asia, and the World Council of Churches. They are also available in the bibliographies of new publications in the field of Indian Christianity (e.g., Sugirtharajah 1993 and Chhungi 2008).

On the other hand, the visibility of Hindi Christian sources is quite limited when compared to that of non-Hindi (especially English) sources to study Indian Christianity. Consequently, the influence of Hindi materials on wider Christian conversations in India and abroad is limited when compared to that of other Christian materials from India. Christian materials in Hindi are numerous. They are, however, less well-known in non-Hindi circles and their mobility outside India’s Hindi-speaking areas is minimal at best.

The organizational sources of Protestant Hindi Christian materials can be divided into two groups: mainline church-related agencies, like the H.T.L.C., I.S.P.C.K., and Lucknow Publishing House, and publication departments of newline conversion-focused evangelical churches. In addition to the H.T.L.C., I.S.P.C.K., and Lucknow Publishing House, the New Theological College in Dehra Dun – where Hindi and English are languages of instruction – has been publishing Hindi materials for nearly four decades. Recent contributions to the world of Hindi
Christian thought have come from the in-house publication departments of independent and evangelical churches and organizations focused on conversions, church planting, and social services. Christian organizations have supported Hindi works in a variety of areas like histories of church missions (Singh 1969), evangelism (Howell 2006), Christian guidebooks (James 1978), poems (Arya 2003), and personal testimonies (Harold 2010).

The corpus of Hindi Christian literature includes works by lay and ordained Christians, women and men, church leaders, school teachers and college professors, social workers, missionaries, government officials, farmers, hospital chaplains, and a variety of other professionals. Hindi Christian materials are written for B.D. and M.Div. students, doctoral scholars, seminaries, churches, social needs, and in response to concrete local church challenges. They are available in the form of poems, theater/plays (especially Christmas and Holy Week plays), explanations of traditional Christian creeds, commentaries on Scripture, stories (a popular form being Gospel-based chronological retellings of Jesus’s life and ministry), hymns and songs, personal testimonies, and conversion accounts.

**Themes in Hindi Christian Literature**

Hindi Christian literature can be broadly arranged in four thematic categories: doctrinal works, narrative accounts, biblical commentaries, and guidebooks. *Doctrinal works* survey theological literature, draw on historical Christian creeds, and try to explain some of the traditional language of Christianity. These works deal with, e.g., doctrines of God, creation, Christ, salvation, sin, and eschatology. Their audience is primarily other scholars, seminary students, pastors, theology
professors, and church organizations. *Narrative accounts* retell Jesus’s life and ministry in story-form (e.g., by arranging in a chronological sequence certain selected events from the canonical Gospels), conversion accounts (especially popular among churches that actively seek converts), short stories, poems, songs, films, and plays that seek to use these accounts to shape faith and discipleship. Hindi *commentaries* focus on explaining biblical books or verses. These works include textual commentaries on books of the Bible, thematic commentaries on scriptural texts, sermons and sermon outlines, and songs that explain or are inspired by specific Bible verses. Their audience generally includes scholars, seminarians, pastors, potential converts, and missionaries. Finally, there are *instructions manuals and guides*. These provide specific and general instructions to particular groups – like pastors, preachers, church leaders, youth ministers, bishops, women, and men – on how one can live a life that reflects Christian discipleship.

*Doctrinal Works*

The last fifty years have produced a number of theological works in Hindi that deal with traditional Christian doctrines (Dongre 1960, Chauhan 1962, Yesudas 1965, Zahir 1968, Lal 1970, Khan 1971, Singh 1975, and Dayal 2005). Bishop Din Dayal’s *Masīhī Dharm Viṃān kā Paricay* (“Introduction to Christian Theology”; 2005)\(^{10}\) is one such example that explains and reinterprets one of the most universally-used Christian creeds in the Indian context.

\(^{10}\) Bishop Dayal was born in 1925 in a Christian family in north India (Uttar Pradesh). He received his B.A. from Allahabad University in 1949 and a B.D. from Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur, in 1952. He was ordained in 1953. He served as Chaplain at the Allahabad Agricultural Institute and was missionary in South Africa from 1955-64. He completed a Th.M. from Pittsburgh Seminary in 1965 and served as pastor in India from 1965-70. In 1970, he was elected Moderator of the North India Synod of the United Church of Northern India (UCNI), a founding member of the Church of North India (CNI). After the formation of CNI in 1970, Dayal was elected...
Dayal begins his theology with a framing statement. When engaged in theology, it is necessary to exhibit great care in the language we use, in the concepts we employ, and in the claims we adapt. Yet, theology does not seek static claims but rather seeks to ground its experiments in existing expressions. On the one hand, Dayal reinterprets the statement of Chalcedon in creative ways. On the other, he cautions against modern restatements (ādhunik punarkathan) that are sloppy “Indianizations.”

Chalcedon’s claim regarding the hypostatic union of Christ’s divine and human nature was surely a product of the Greek philosophies of that time. Yet modern theologies that gloss over the special relationship between Jesus and God, Dayal argues, fail to preserve the complexity of Christ’s personhood and therefore fall short of a biblically-grounded Christian witness.

Part of Dayal’s hesitancy to embrace “Indianization” (bhārātiyākaraṇ) stems from his insistence that Christian theological claims be understood as inter-connected. Denying the interplay between Jesus’s human and divine reality would, for instance, affect how one would interpret the stories about his resurrection and salvific act. Or, an understanding of Jesus as an inspired human being or incarnate Word would shape what we meant when we shared the saving work of a

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11. Dayal, Masiḥī Dharm Vijnān, 140.
12. Dayal, Masiḥī Dharm Vijnān, 144.
13. Dayal, Masiḥī Dharm Vijnān, 142.
14. Dayal, Masiḥī Dharm Vijnān, 170: “Salvation is the beginning of the fulfillment of creation and the appearance of the form of its final conclusion. In this way, the doctrines of creation, salvation and the final end are connected with each other.” (Uddhār sṛṣṭi kī pūrti kā ārambh hai tathā antim samāpan kā prakāṣṭikaraṇ. Is prakār sṛṣṭi, uddhār aur antim samāpan ke siddhānt ek dūre se juḍe hue hain.)
loving God who unites humanity with Godself in the incarnated Word.\textsuperscript{15} The necessary interplay of theological claims requires of theology a degree of clarity, coherence, and care.\textsuperscript{16}

Underlying Dayal’s caution is a theory of language that is theological in nature. Theology, he writes, has three specific functions. First, it should try to reveal the Christian faith in ordinary language (\textit{sāmānyā bhāṣā}). Second, where theology presents itself as a technical language (\textit{prāvidhik bhāṣā}), it should be able to express and reflect the quotidian faith and practices of Christians. Finally, theology should be intelligible to people. While theological works may specialize in some of these three aspects, Dayal’s underlying argument is clear: theological language should be faithful (presumably to scripture, church, and tradition), clear, and accessible.

Theology is a way to use ordinary language in extraordinary and analogical (\textit{sādṛśyamūlak}) ways that are grounded in Scripture and history.\textsuperscript{17} Hence, Dayal takes to task Indian theologians like Sadhu Sundar Singh and Appasamy when they present Christ as an \textit{avātār} in Hindu terms. He refuses the use of \textit{avātār} for ‘incarnation’ because, unlike certain crucial features of \textit{avātārs} in Hinduism, Christ is the sole incarnation of a God who comes to save and not to destroy the wicked.\textsuperscript{18}

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\textsuperscript{15} Dayal, \textit{Masīhī Dharm Vijñān}, 145-50, 171-73.
\textsuperscript{16} Dayal, \textit{Masīhī Dharm Vijñān}, 3-4. ‘Theology’ is translated in Hindi as \textit{dharm vijñān}, which literally means ‘religious science,’ or the science of religion. Playing on the word \textit{vijñān} (science), Dayal argues [p. 8]: “If theology \textit{[dharm vijñān]} is a type of science \textit{[vijñān]} then like a science it should possess clarity, and harmony \textit{[sāmañjasyātā], or internal coherence] and comprehensiveness \textit{[vyāpakātā]} are important in its explanations.” (\textit{Yadī dharm vijñān ek prakār kā vijñān hai to vijñān ke samān usme spaṣṭā honi chāhie, aur uskī vyākhya me sāmañjasyātā aur vyāpakātā āvashyak hai.})
\textsuperscript{17} Dayal, \textit{Masīhī Dharm Vijñān}, 31.
\textsuperscript{18} Dayal, \textit{Masīhī Dharm Vijñān}, 148-49. Translators of the Hindi Bible have formalized this difference by using \textit{dehādhāraṇ} (taking on flesh, en-fleshing) instead of \textit{avātār} to communicate the Christian idea of incarnation.
\end{flushleft}
The ordinariness of theology finally means that it speaks to issues that are familiar to many. Dayal frames the task of Christian theology as a response to a set of questions recognizable to a wide range of people. How and where is God revealed? What does it mean for humans to be created by God? How should one interpret the life, death, and resurrection of Christ? How is sin addressed by God? What awaits us as our ultimate destination?¹⁹

Dayal’s theology represents a type of theologizing in Hindi that seeks to impart Christian truths by explaining church doctrines. The other general type of theology in Hindi that one finds is a type of theology that seeks expression not in doctrinal explanations but in artistic expressions like poems, hymns, and theater. For instance, *Masīh Merī Manzil* (“Christ My Destination”) by Shivraj Kumar Mahendra (b. 1978), a first-generation Christian convert ordained in 2008 by the Christian Evangelical Assembly, is a collection of poems that address the nature of sin, church, discipleship, and worship.²⁰ Mahendra is clear that his task is pedagogical and theological²¹, his collection a wide-ranging commentary on matters Christological to liturgical, though the medium he chooses is poetry over prose. He presents his collection especially in the service of new converts, that their faith be strengthened and renewed through the medium of poetry.²² In using

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²⁰ Mahendra, *Masīh Merī Manzil*: in the poem *Ārādhănā kā Samay* (“Time of Worship”), Mahendra offers that the time of worship is a time of thanksgiving and openness. Come as you are, bring gifts, bring praise, bring your troubles, pray for help, and come in holiness. The poem *Parameśvar kā Sevak* (“Servant of God”) brings together a collection of commitments taken by a person who decides to become a disciple of God. Mahendra, *Masīh Merī Manzil*, 25, 30.


²¹ Theological in the sense of being speech about God and the things of God but not in the sense of systematic theology when understood as the interlinked study of topics like the being of God, nature of God, Christology, ecclesiology, etc.

²² Mahendra, *Masīh Merī Manzil*, xv-xvii: “The occasion for the publication of *Masīh Merī Manzil* is very important. It represents an expression of joy, thanks, and gratitude on my completion of 12 years in Christian faith and service. It also marks my ordination. Along with that, it testifies to God the Father’s unlimited mercy, love,
poetry as his medium of theology, Mahendra stands in a long line of poet-theologians among the
Christians of north India.

One of the poems, Usne Kahā Thā (“He Had Said”), like others in its genre, uses a series of
contrasts to explain human sinfulness and God’s response to it: Christ wants us to be bold, but
we lumber around with fear and despair; he asks us to witness, but our (sinful) acts do not bear
that out; he wants us to liberate the captive, but we are slaves to our desires; he asks us to rejoice
(in unity), but we cling to old divisions. As Mahendra writes:

Usne kahā thā krūs uṭhākar calne
Inhe dekho ye apni lāś dho rahe hain.

He had said: pick up the cross and walk
Look at them! They haul around their dead bodies.

Usne kahā thā prārthānā mein jāgē rahne
Inhe dekho ye din-dahāre so rahe hain.

He had said: be alert in prayers
Look at them! They are asleep in broad daylight.

Usne kahā thā kal kī cintā na karne
Inhe dekho ye parsoṁ kī fikr mein ro rahe hain.

He had said: do not worry for tomorrow
Look at them! They wail in worry for the day after tomorrow.

Usne kahā thā jākar cele banāne
Inhe dekho ye to khud cele nahīṁ ban pā rahe hain.

He had said: go and make disciples
Look at them! They themselves have failed as disciples.

grace, forgiveness, blessings, care, and constant encouragement….It is my hope and prayer that the collection of
poems presented [here] will encourage Christian sisters and brothers, especially those who are new in faith, and will
be found useful for the glory of Christ the Lord.” (Masīh Merī Manzil ke prakāśan kā avāsar atyant mahattvāpūrṇ
hai. Yah masīhī viśvās aur sevākāi mein mere 12 varṣ pūre karne ke ānand, dhanyāvād aur ābhār kī abhivyakti ko
darsātā hai. Yah mere abhiṣek (ārdineśan) ko bhi cīnī kartā hai. Iske sāth hī, mere ab tak ke safar mein param pitā
paramēśvar kī asīm krupā, prem, anugrah, kṣamā, āśīs, dekkhāl aur satat prosūṭhān kī gavāhī bhī detā hai….Merī
āśā aur prārthānā hai ki prastut kavītā-saṅgrah masīhī bahno-bhāiyo ke lie, viśeśākār unke lie jo viśvās mein nae
hai, prosūṭhān kā kāraṇ hogā aur prabhu paramēśvar kī mahīmā ke lie upāyogī siddh hogā.)

23. Mahendra, Masīh Merī Manzil, 55-56.
Another one, *Kalīsiyā* ("Congregation"),\(^{24}\) imagines an ideal church. It is, Mahendra writes, a group of believers, a company of castes, a caretaker of divine plans, a homestead for the scorned, and a bearer of grace. Mahendra writes, for example:

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\begin{array}{ll}
Viśvāsiyom kī sangati hai & \text{A group of believers} \\
Sab jātiyom kī sadgati hai & \text{A company of castes} \\
Masīhiyom kī maṇḍalī kalīsiyā & \text{A society of Christians, the church} \\
Īśvarīy parivār kī pragātī hai. & \text{It is the progress of the divine family.} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
Tiraskritoṁ kī naī sāvikriti hai & \text{A new acceptance of the scorned} \\
Bahiṣkṛtoṁ kī naś anukṛti hai & \text{A new imitation of the outcast} \\
Dīn dukhiyom kī maṇḍalī kalīsiyā & \text{A society of the wretched, the church} \\
Īśvarīy anubhūtiyom kī abhivyakti hai. & \text{It is an expression of divine compassion.} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
Gumānāmoṁ kī naī pahacān hai & \text{The new identity of the unknown} \\
Nāummīdoṁ kā nayā armān hai & \text{The new longing of the hopeless} \\
Āśādhāriyom kī maṇḍalī kalīsiyā & \text{A society of hopefuls, the church} \\
Īśvarīy protsāhan kī khān hai. & \text{It is a treasury of divine grace.} \\
\end{array}
\]

Where *Masīh Merī Manzil* allowed Mahendra to theologize in poetry, John Henry Anand’s *O Mṛtyu! Kahāṁ Hai Terā Ḍaṅk*? ("O Death! Where is Thy Sting?") took the form of a theatrical play that dramatized Christian responses to people with AIDS who seek comfort in a society in the habit of neglecting them. The works of Mahendra – which offers a rich ecclesiology by imagining the sort of church to which Christ calls Christians – and Anand represent a corpus of artistic materials that theologizes and preaches, and teaches and (in)forms their readers in Christian faith and practices.

_Narrative accounts: Stories about Jesus_

For many Hindi Christian authors, it is not enough that one learns of the Christian faith. The task of theology and Christian literature is also to animate faith and guide discipleship. This is the

essential goal of that category of Hindi materials which frequently uses stories from biblical accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus to translate faith and traditions into practices and faithful living. Two types of narratives especially dominate this genre of literature: stories from the Gospels and personal conversion accounts. Each of these sub-genres offers something different to Christian readers. Gospel-based accounts recall the story of Christ and his disciples; conversion accounts ground those stories in our time and place through the witness of believers who chose to accept Christ and live in discipleship.

Komal Masih and Christopher Peter, as an instance, rely on canonical Gospels and first-century sources to re-construct Jesus’s life and ministry.25 The four Gospels constitute the “most important” (“sabse mahatvāpūrn”) Christian sources to reconstruct Jesus’s life and ministry.26 Redaction criticism (“sampādākīya ālocănā”) and form criticism (“rūp ālocănā”) inform us that the Gospels are redacted and edited accounts of the life of Jesus.27 But the Gospels, especially in Matthew and Luke, offer “sufficient historical information” (paryāpt aitihāsik jānkārī) to allow us to tell the story of Christ’s life, ministry, and death.28

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25. The Rev. Dr. Komal Masih, born in Uttar Pradesh, completed his B.D. and M.Th. degrees from Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur, in 1960. After serving as a parish priest for two years in the Methodist Church of India, he joined as professor the Bareilly Theological Seminary (1962-1965) and North India Theological College (1967-76). He obtained an S.T.M. from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC (1965-67). He then served as District Superintendent of the Muradabad Conference of the Methodist Church, and from 1981-82 as Vice-President of the Hindi Theological Literature Committee.

Rey. Christopher B. Peter was also born in Uttar Pradesh. He completed a Bachelor of Theology from North India Theological College (NITC) in 1973 and completed a Bachelor of Divinity from Leonard Theological College in 1975. He was ordained a pastor of the Methodist Church in 1974. From 1976-1979 he taught the Old Testament at North India Theological College. He earned an M.Th. in 1981 from United Theological College, Bangalore and rejoined NITC as a professor in 1981.

26. Masih and Peter, Prabhu Yeśu kī Jīvănī aur Sevākāry, 9: “About the life and ministry of Jesus the most important Christian sources are (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).” (Yīśu ke jīvan evaṁ sevā kāry ke sambandh mein sabse mahatvapūrn khrīṣṭīy srot hain (mattī, markus, lūkā aur yūhannā).)

27. Masih and Peter, Prabhu Yeśu kī Jīvănī aur Sevākāry, 3.

Like other narrative theologians such as Hans W. Frei and Ronald F. Thiemann, Masih and Peter turn to Gospel accounts of the speech-acts of Jesus to discover the “personality” (“vyaktitv”) of Jesus. Further, like in the works of Frei and Thiemann, to tell the story of Jesus is not merely an exercise in sharing information. To narrate Jesus’s story is also a didactic exercise since Jesus draws our attention to certain values and ways of being that correspond to our relationship with God. The Gospels not only show us the life and ministry of Jesus and his disciples but also tell us what he taught his disciples to do. Hindi Christian narrative accounts then build on the Gospel model to both show and tell, to share and teach.

Stories about Jesus and his work are also told in poems, songs, films, plays, and novels. Sarojini Arya’s *Kavitā meṁ Śubh Sandeś* (“Good News in Poetry”; 2003), for instance, is a remarkable

29. In *The Identity of Jesus Christ*, Frei writes: “A man’s being is the unique and peculiar way in which he himself holds together the qualities which he embodies—or rather, the qualities which he is” (5; emphasis mine). Further, “A man . . . is what he does [emphasis original] uniquely, the way no one else does it . . . In that kind of passage from free intention [emphasis mine] into action, ordering the two (intention and act) into one harmony, a free man [emphasis mine] gains his being. He becomes what he is; he gains his identity” (12). For Frei, the self-agency to self-claim makes identity self-referential: “A person’s identity is the total of all his physical and personality characteristics referred neither to other persons for comparison or contrast nor to a common ideal type called human, but to himself . . . A person’s identity is the self-referral, or ascription to him, of his physical and personal states, properties, characteristics, and actions” (95). In similar vein, Thiemann writes in *Revelation and Theology* that “a person’s identity is constituted by the intentions he or she carries into action. Actions are appropriately described as enacted intentions, and intentions are rightly described as implicit actions. Identity-description is nothing more or less than the description of characteristic intention-action patterns across a chronological sequence.” Hence, personal identity means “characteristic patterns of intention and action” (90; emphasis mine). For Frei and Thiemann, a person’s identity is linked to and revealed through what the person intends to do and what s/he does. A link between intentions and actions underlies the identification of a person’s identity. Intended actions when enacted persistently over time provide the characteristic patterns of behavior that allow the identification. Personal identity in this account is very much the result of self-manifestation.

30. Masih and Peter, *Prabhu Yeśu kī Jīvănī aur Sevākāry*, 133-34: “Studying the parables of Jesus we find important and interesting information concerning the individual personality of Jesus.” (*Yīśu ke dṛṣṭāntoṁ ko padhkar hameṁ yīśu ke nijī vyaktitv ke viṣay meṁ bhī mahatvapūrṇ va rocak jānkārī milī hai.*)

31. Masih and Peter, *Prabhu Yeśu kī Jīvănī aur Sevākāry*, 133: “According to the Century Dictionary a parable is such a story that can be true and that is said to teach some ethical truth.” (*Sencurī ḍikśănarī ke anusār dṛṣṭānt ek aisi kathā hai, jo sac ho sakṭi hai aur jo kisī naatik saty kī šikshā dene ke lie bolī jāi.*)

32. A career government official, Dr. Arya was a research assistant in India’s Ministry of Education, Assistant Director at the Bureau of Indian Standards, and a Joint Director at India’s Home Ministry. She has published in Hindi 11 books on education, science and technology, handicrafts, and stories of the Bible. She was awarded the Hindi Millennium Award for her various contributions to Hindi literature. (Biography from Arya, *Kavitā meṁ Śubh Sandeś*, back cover)
collection of 77 poems that narrate the story of Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection based on the Gospel of Matthew. Hindi Christian songs – informative and didactic – are widely available among Christian communities in central and north India. Christian hymns, which include missionary imports like Martin Luther’s *A Mighty Fortress is Our God* translated in Hindi and local entrants like Sabir Chimmanlal’s *Dil kā Badalnā Cāhiye* (“The Heart Should Change”) share space with commercial Christian songs.

Like their narrative and poetic counterparts, Hindi Christian songs narrate diverse ideas. They speak of God’s unending love, Christ’s ministry, the Kingdom of God, creation, human frailty, discipleship, refuge in God, and joy in Christ. Like others of its genre, as an instance, *Dil Merā Le Le, Pyāre Yīśu* (“Take my Heart, O Dear Jesus”), a very popular hymn, presents Christ as the sole object of a Christian’s desire. Worldly attachments clutter the heart and lead it away from devotion to Christ. Turn to Scripture, the hymn then instructs, and let the Spirit reside in you:

*Dil merā le le, pyāre yīśu,*
*tūne ise banāyā hai,*
*isameṁ tū apnā ghar banā le,*
*jiske liye hī yah banāyā hai.*

*Take my heart, O dear Jesus,*
*you are the one who has made it,*
*make it now your own home*
*for this only it was made.*

*Duniyā kī sab cījeṁ nikālkar,*
*ise pāk aur sāph ab kar,*
*gandagī gunāhom kī sab dhokar,*
*us khūn se jo bahāyā hai.*

*Having cleansed all worldly things,*
*make it now pure and clean,*
*having cleansed all dirt of sins,*
*by that blood which you have shed.*

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33. *Ārādhānā ke Gīt*, Hymn #70.
34. *Ārādhānā ke Gīt*, Hymn #310.
35. Commercial (for-profit) songs are generally non-denominational in content and are released by music labels to capitalize on main events on the Christian calendar like Good Friday, Easter, and Christmas. They are produced and released also by Christian missions for praise, worship, and sale during revival meetings and church planting events. Audio CDs and cassettes (in rural areas) are widely available during holiday seasons and in evangelical gatherings. The commercial viability of such songs routinely attracts top-level recording artists, musicians, and studios around the country. Shaan, Udit Narayan, Sadhana Sargam, and Kavita Krishnamurthy – all popular playback singers in Bollywood – have recorded anthologies of old and new Christian Hindi songs.
Commentaries on the Bible

In addition to hymns and general songs, recurring didactic and narrative tools include retellings of Christ’s “seven sayings on the cross” or sātvāṇī (e.g., Prasad 1991, Anand 1993, and Sona 2010). Commentaries on the seven sayings of Jesus on the cross, or sātvāṇī, offer a particularly revealing look at Hindi scriptural interpretations due to many reasons. First, the seven savings, which are spoken and preached in Hindi churches during Good Friday services, allow congregations to transform scriptural interpretation into a liturgical act. In the Good Friday services of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh, for instance, each saying is read aloud, followed by a brief reflection, a specific hymn (a specific set of seven matching hymns, one for each saying, is usually repeated each year), and a prayer. Each coda – reading, reflection, hymn, prayer – is timed to ensure the seventh coda ends with a moment of silence that coincides with a pre-set estimate of the time of Jesus’s death.

37. In common order, the seven sayings are (NRSV): (1) Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing. [Lk. 23:34] (2) Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise. [Lk. 23:43] (3) Woman, here is your son…. Here is your mother. [Jn. 19:26-27] (4) My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? [Mt. 27:46] (5) I am thirsty. [Jn. 19:28] (6) It is finished. [Jn. 19:30] (7) Father, into your hands I commend my spirit. [Lk. 23:46]

38. In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh, this is set to 3 p.m. on Good Friday.
Second, individual Gospel accounts of Jesus’s pronouncements on Calvary are arranged chronologically to reproduce the timeline of Christ’s death on the cross. The seven verses are deployed as individual pieces of a scriptural puzzle that must be properly arranged to create a portrait of Jesus’s dying acts. Given the role of structure in the ways the Gospels present this sequence of events, the liturgical arrangement of the seven sayings of Jesus has also been standardized across Hindi Christian churches. This standardization, in turn, reflects a common tradition within Hindi Christianity from which different interpreters draw. Prasad 1991, Anand 1993, and Sona 2010, for instance, identify and arrange the seven sayings identically. Standardization has meant the ritual of sātvāṇī is generally recognizable and immediately familiar across a variety of Hindi-speaking churches.

Finally, when read in light of each other, the “seven sayings” constitute a creative exercise of polyvalent Christology. Anand notes that the Greek original for ‘It is finished’ is tetelesataī, which is a word used by merchants for transactions. Sins are our debt before God and debts, by their nature, suggest that a repayment is involved. Christ pays the debt and “completes” the “battle” against sin and evil. He re-establishes our relationship with God. Where Anand uses mercantile language to present a transactional account of the Cross, Sona uses the idea of just recompense to portray Christ’s death as a sacrificial event.

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39. For the order, see above, note 36.
40. In *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (798), Liddell and Scott note that teleou can represent both “to complete” and “to pay what one owes.”
41. Anand, Śubh Śukrāvār ki Ārādhānā, 45: “All types of sin are also our debt toward God. God cannot accept us till this debt is not paid.” (Sab prakār ke pāp bhī parameśvar ke prati hamārā karj hain. Parameśvar hameṁ tab tak svikār nahiṁ kar saktā jab tak yah karj cuktā nahiṁ ho jatā.)
42. Anand, Śubh Śukrāvār ki Ārādhānā, 47: “What was completed? What was finished? The battle against sin, the battle against evil. Our relationship with God was re-established.” (Kyā pūrā ḥuā? Kyā samāpt huā? Pāp ke viruddh yuddh, burāi ke viruddh yuddh. Parameśvar se hamārā sambandh punah sthāpit huā.)
Christ’s sacrifice ends all sacrifices. It “ended sin” by removing sin from the world. “Only after” this work does Christ complete the work of justice and, in doing so, destroy Satan’s power. Prasad agrees with Sona that Christ’s death and resurrection end the need for any more attempts to reconcile us with God. But, unlike Anand and Sona, Prasad offers that the work of Christ does not “finish” with his death. “No, the resurrected Lord, seated in heaven close to His Father at His [Father’s] right hand is working for you and for me” to help humans continue their relationship with God. Annual enactments of sātvāṇī, then, represent the sorts of careful, textual, and liturgical analyses that have made a deep and lasting place within the general community of Hindi Christians in central India. Sātvāṇī constitute a theological and liturgical act that weaves together from different Gospels a cogent account of Jesus’s life and ministry as found in his sayings on the cross. In addition to sātvāṇīs, other forms of biblical commentaries are also popular and readily available. Two such examples include Benjamin Khan’s Māno Yā Na Māno Prabhu Yīśu Ko Jāno (“Believe or not, Know Jesus Christ”; 2003) and Edward D’Mello’s Īśvāṇī kā Sāthī (“Companion of God’s Voice”; 2007).

In Māno Yā Na Māno, Khan offers a patient reading of the Gospel of John in the context of the other three gospels employing many familiar tools of biblical commentary. He begins by clarifying his methodology: the work will draw on the Gospel of John to present both the speech and acts of Christ and John’s insights into the salvific work of Christ as the eternal Word of God. Further, as the oldest ‘standard’ gospel, the Gospel of John also helps fills the gaps in the first three gospels – even as Khan acknowledges that the gospels are but partial accounts of Jesus’s 33 years and there were other gospels that vied for attention in the early church. In other words,

43. Sona, Antīm Sāṭ Vacan, 54-55.
44. Prasad, Krūs kā Bhed, 24: Nahūṁ, prabhu jūṭhākar apne pitā ke pās svarg meṁ uske dāhine hāth baiṁhā mere aur āpke liye kāry kar rahā hai.
Khan’s commentary presents itself as a theological commentary on the Gospel of John that seeks to present a complex (yet limited) sketch of the person and work of Christ. 45 Khan then goes through a subject-by-subject reading of John’s Gospel with explanatory notes and cross-references to the other gospels.

For instance, commenting on John 1:19 (when the Jewish leaders question John the Baptist) he writes: “Hope in the Kingdom of God was the heart of the Jewish faith and the central message of the Old Testament.” 46 John the Baptist was preaching the imminence of this kingdom and asking Jews to repent. Thousands of Jews flocked to him. “A common man, preaching repentance and starting a new tradition of baptism, was not only attracting thousands to himself but was also forcing the religious leaders to find out who is this person?” 47 This is what brought the Jewish priests and Levites to John the Baptist and gave him the chance to declare the imminent arrival of Christ. Or, commenting on John 10:22-42, Khan explains a change in Jesus’s attitude towards the publicity around his speech and acts. The Jesus of the earlier chapters of John is cautious. “The danger was that, having seen his miracles and knowing that [Jesus] was the expected savior [literally, “the savior to come”], people may forcibly capture him and declare

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45. Khan writes (Māno Yā Na Māño, xiii): “I have followed the path of the gospel penned by Saint John to write this story of the life of Jesus Christ. [This is] because … the fourth gospel presents a holistic picture [literally, a “large picture”] of the life of Jesus Christ in which we see not only a sequential account of external events but we also see the way in which each internal link of the sketch of Jesus Christ the Savior is joined together. And this gospel fulfills the gaps we see in the accounts of the other gospels.” (Maiṁne yīśu masīh ke jīvan kī kahāni ko likhne meṁ sant yūhannā dvārā racit susamācār ke mārg par calā hūṁ. Kyomki … cauthā susamācār yīśu masīh ke jīvan kā ek viśāl citr prastut kartā hai jismeṁ hum keval bāhy ghaṭānāoṁ ko sīrīrā var hī nahiṁ dekhte varan uddhārkartā yīśu masīh ke citr ke āntārik rūp kī pratyeck kaḍī ko āpas mem jude hue dekhte hain. Aur yah susamācār any susamācāroṁ ki ghaṭānāoṁ meṁ jo darāreṁ dikhāī defī defī hain unki pūrti kartā hai.)

46. Khan, Māno Yā Na Māño, 52: Parameśvar ke rājī kī āśā yahūdī dharm kā ḍār ṛday ṛth aur purāne niyam kī śiksā kā kendh bindu.

47. Khan, Māno Yā Na Māño, 53: Ek sāṁy vyakti paścāttāp kā pracār kartā huā aur baptismā kī ek naī paramparā kā subhārāmbh kartā huā, na keval hazāroṁ ādmiyoṁ ko apnī or kheṁc rahā thā hāhī isne dhārmik netāoṁ ko bhī majbūr kīyā ki ye patā lagāyem ki yah vyakti kaon hain?
him the king of the Jews, and in doing so incite a new uprising in the land.”

During the Feast of Dedication that brought him to Jerusalem, however, Jesus makes a very public claim regarding his relationship with God (John 10:30) and faces the ire of the Jewish people. Khan concludes his commentary on the Gospel of John with reflections on the episode of doubting Thomas in John 20:24.

Such familiar verse-based commentaries exist along with sermons and reflections on key biblical verses. D’Mello’s collection of stories exemplifies this type of creative re-telling of biblical verses, where relatable stories ground selected verses and their main lessons, as demonstrated in the following two examples which each contain a topic and a verse and a short story that explains them.

1. 
   a. **Pratiśodh** (“Revenge”)
   b. “Āp bhī ek dusre to kṣamā kareṁ. (Ephe 4:32)”
      (“And you too forgive one another. (Eph. 4:32)”)
   c. Prasad was the village chieftain for many years. During his administration he severely persecuted Catholic priests and nuns. Poor people disliked him too. Once he fell very ill. He expressed his desire to be admitted for treatment only to the Catholic hospital in the city and not to any other hospital. When asked for his reason, he said, “Catholics do not seek revenge against others, treat others with fairness, and forgive [those who have wronged them] because they are followers of Christ.”

2. 
   a. **Īsā Jīvit Haiṁ** (“Jesus is Alive”)

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48. Khan, Māno Yā Na Māno, 144: Khatrā yah thā ki unke āścaryākarm dekh aur yah jān ki āp hī āne vāle masīhā haim to ho saktā thā ki log unheṁ zabardasti pakad yahūdiyoṁ kā rājā ghoṣit kar deś meṁ ek vidroh kī āg bhaḍak uthtaṁ.

b. “Jīvan kī Roṭī Maiṁ Hūṁ. (Yohan 6:35)”
(“I am the Bread of Life. (Jn. 6:35)”)

c. Sampat had become a Christian. His relatives did not like this. One day both his brothers came to his place and said to him, “Why did you become a Christian? What does our religion lack? Do you know who Jesus was, who were his parents? …” Sampat patiently listened to his brothers’ questions and after thinking about them said, “Before becoming a Christian I used to act in wicked ways, my children used to be afraid of me, I did not have food in my house, my wife was unhappy … since I have accepted Christ, I have stopped drinking, there is peace in my house, children have food to eat, we live in peace. For me Christ is alive. We are living according to his teachings; there is prayer and worship in the house. We have found a new life in Christ. 50

These stories combine biblical lessons with actionable wisdom. In the first story a bully turns in time of serious need to those he previously tormented because he knows that as Christians they will still treat with kindness. The story does not say whether the bully is reformed post-need, but the moral of the story seems to be to forgive those who have erred against you. In the second story, the new life of a recent convert draws our attention to the real impact that the acceptance of Jesus can have in one’s life. The story invites its listeners and readers to live in Christ and understand his presence as active and transformative in the world.

What we find in Hindi commentaries on the Bible is then a range of tools to understand the Bible and apply its lessons in the lives of Christians. Some commentaries are more traditional and take their readers through a verse-by-verse or a topic-by-topic examination of biblical books. Other commentaries are different and interpret biblical verses through quotidian and relatable stories and reflections. This diversity in commentaries – structured reconstructions (sātvāṇīs), textual

50. D’Mello, Īśvāṇī kā Sāthī, 91: Sampat īsāī ban gayā thā. Uske sambandhiyoṁ ke yah acchā nahīṁ lagā. Ek din uske donoṁ bhāṁī uske yahāṁ āye aur bole, “tum kyoṁ īsāī ban gaye ho? Hamāre dharm mein kyā kamī hai? Tumheṁ mālīṁ hai īsā kaun the, uske māṁ-bāp kaun the?…” Sampat ne śānt hokar apne bhāiyoṁ ke prāśn sune aur sockar kahā, “īsāī banne ke pūrva miṁ durācār kartā thā, mere bāl-bacce mujhse ḍarte the, mere ghar mein khāne kā anāj nahīṁ thā, merī aurat dukhī thī … jab se mainṁ īsā ko svīkār kiṁyā hai, mainṁ dārā pīṁ chād diyā hai, mere ghar mein ab śānti hai, baccoṁ ko bhar-pet khāṁ miltā hai, ham pyār se jīte haim. Mere lie īsā jīvit haim. Unki śīkṣā ke anusār hum jī rahe haim, ghar mein prārthānā, bhajan-kīrtan hotā hai. Hameṁ īsā se nayā jīvaṁ milā hai.
analyses (Khan’s *Māno Yā Na Māno*), and creative adaptations (D’Mello’s short stories) – reflects the wide range of approaches Hindi Christian authors have adopted towards the reception of the Bible in Christian communities.

*Guides for Christian Living*

Along with doctrinal works, narrative accounts, textual commentaries, and liturgical interpretations, another popular practice in Hindi Christian literature consists of advice for faithful living. More than simple advice books, such materials are diverse in form and content. Ideas for ethical living populate Hindi theologies, but the ethical instructions come in many forms. There are, for instance, systematic presentations of Christian ethics (Khan 2009), tracts against community ills like alcoholism, gambling, and casteism (D’Mello 2007), advice on nurturing children, resources for new converts, guidelines for church leaders (both lay and ordained), and systems of ethical concepts and applications (James 1978).

Further, given the deep relation between faith and action in Christ’s life, ethics and theology are inseparable. Christ lived and taught a certain way of being and speaking in the world. His words and deeds show us what must be done in faithful discipleship. As Khan explains, ethics relate with theology in two ways. First, the stuff of Christian ethics comes from the words and deeds of Jesus – and his disciples. Second, the job of Christian ethics is to translate Christian faith into practice in an ever-changing world. Christian ethics explores the stuff (*sāmagrī*) of Christian
faith in the context of a commitment (saṅkalp) to Christ and to Christian community (samāj) in the world.\footnote{Khan, \textit{Khristīy Nītiśāstr}, 16-17: “There is a close relationship between Christian ethics and theology. Christian ethics depend on theology in two ways: (1) Christian ethics obtains its material from the life, teachings, and the personality of Jesus Christ. (2) It is the task of Christian ethics to provide a moral exposition of Christian principles or faith. From this perspective, ethics serves theology. Christian ethics reflects on Christian materials of faith [literally, “faith-stuff”] in the context of [the] vow and Christian people and the Christian community.” (\textit{Khristīy nītiśāstr kā dharmāvijñān ke sāth ghanīṣṭh sambandh hai. Do rūpoṃ mēṃ khristīy nītiśāstr dharmāvijñān par ādhārit hai: (1) Khristīy nītiśāstr āpnī viṣay sāmagrī yīśu khrīst kī jīvāṃ aur śikāḥ tathā vyaktitv se prāpt kartā hai. (2) Khristīy nītiśāstr kā kāry yah hai kī khristīy siddhāntoṃ yā viśvās kī naitik vyākhya kare. Is drṣṭikōṇ se nītiśāstr dharmāvijñān kā sevak hai. Khristīy nītiśāstr saṅkalp aur khrīstī jan aur khrīstī samāj ke sandarbh mēṃ khristīy viśvās-sāmagrī par vicār kartā hai.) \footnotemark[51]}

It is Christ’s command (“ādeś”) that we love God and neighbor.\footnote{Khan, \textit{Khristīy Nītiśāstr}, 65-66.} It is also Christ’s desire that we live faithfully in the love, mercy, and invitation of God. We find this invitation in discourses like the Sermon on the Mount (or on the Plain, if you happen to be reading Luke).\footnote{Khan, \textit{Khristīy Nītiśāstr}, 76.} A Christian is asked to exhibit Christ-like values: faith in God, love of God and neighbor, and responsible actions.\footnote{Khan, \textit{Khristīy Nītiśāstr}, 165-76.} Faith and action compete in the Bible, and Khan notes the dissonance between James (2:24-26) and Paul (Romans 3:38). Yet he writes, if works had no value to God, then Christ’s life would lack purpose and is wasted (“vyarth hai”).\footnote{A common translation of \textit{vyarth} is ‘useless.’ However, in the context of Khan’s argument, ‘wasted’ would be a more accurate translation. Khan asserts that Christ (a) saves and (b) teaches. Christ enacts in word and deed the imminent Kingdom of God. But, in addition to this didactic function, Christ’s incarnation, death and resurrection also constitute an act of saving. His death and resurrection point to the healing of our separation from God. The salvific function of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection addresses human sin in our separation from God and the didactic function of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection addresses human sin in our human response to God. These roles of Christ are complementary. Since these functions go hand-in-hand, for a Christian faith in Christ is incomplete without discipleship of Christ. An important purpose of faith is discipleship and vice-versa. Faith and discipleships are useful in their own ways to a Christian. Without the other, in other words, each aspect lacks an important “close relationship” (\textit{ghanīṣṭh sambandh}).} Without denying the necessary relationship between faith and works, Khan insists, Paul accents the work of God for humans rather than the
human response to God. For a Christian, nevertheless, the speech-acts of God in Christ are both the measure and beacon of her life.

In addition to analytical works like Khan’s, ethical insights are also available in practical handbooks on Christian living. One such handbook is a collection of short stories compiled by Edward D’Mello for parents, teachers, and pastors. Through short stories, D’Mello shares advice on how to overcome failure (Parvatārohi, “The Mountain Climbers,” and Akṣamātā, “Incacity”), purify the mind and body (Safāī, “Cleaning”), manage quarrels (Jhagṛa, “The Fight”), handle praise (Suvikhyāt, “Popular”), and serve each other (Bhalā Kāry, “Good Works”). For Khan and D’Mello, ethics and theology go hand in hand, principles being practiced in service to Christ.

The four categories I have proposed – doctrinal treatments, biblical commentaries, narrative accounts, and practical guides – provide a panoramic view of the landscape of Hindi Christian literature. They also shed light on a recurrent theme in such literature: faithful living in the context of wider society. An emphasis on ethics permeates Hindi Christian sources. In theological works, scriptural commentaries, communal stories, and instructional guides, in their

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56. Khan, Khristīy Nītiśāstr, 170: “Paul only wants to show that if works led to liberation then Christ’s descent and sacrifice would be wasted. He is rather emphasizing that which God has done for humans.” (Paulus to keval yah dikhānā cāhtā hai ki yadi karm dvārā hi mukti hai to fir masīh kā avātarit honā aur balidān vyarth hai. Vah to jo īśvar ne manasy ke lie kiyā us par jor de rahā hai.)

57. Khan, Khristīy Nītiśāstr, 63. Interpreting Matt. 5:20, Khan writes, “From this it is clear that no one other than God is good, and God alone is the source and measure of ethics.” (Isse yah spaṣṭ hai ki parameśvar ke sivāy aur koī śubh nahīṁ, aur parameśvar hi naitikātā kā srot evam māpānd hai.) Further, drawing from Bonhoeffer’s Ethics, Khan asks: what does it mean to be a Christian? What does it mean to be a member of a church? What shapes a Christian life? What is the responsibility of a Christian to the world? For Bonhoeffer, to be a Christian is to be a human, to be in relation, and in being so to regain one’s true human nature. Christ is the example of a (true) human life. A Christian lives in the world and in the church as a new human transformed in Christ (Khan, Khristīy Nītiśāstr, 159-62).

58. D’Mello, Īśvāṇi kā Sāthī, 3, 6, 9, 15, 67.
songs, books, sermons, and plays, Hindi Christians can find exhortations to live faithfully.

Before we explore this theme, however, a brief statement on the schema proposed is appropriate.

As a functional schema that has been applied to a vast range of materials, it touches on only some of the most visible elements of its sources. The focus on select materials further limits the scope of structure imposed by the categories. Much more can be said, and much more is available to study, than what is being offered here – I have said more about opportunities for further research in the last chapter. Here, I would note that the framework I offer lacks precedent and is a first attempt at understanding Hindi Christian materials in their diversity and on their own terms. I hope that the framework and features I propose will attract commentary and improvement by the community of scholars and readers interested in the study of Hindi-language Christian literature in general and theology in particular.

A Theology of Relations: Soteriology in Hindi Christian Literature

One of the recurring themes in Hindi Christian literature among the four categories I have proposed is a persistent attention to the social responsibility of Christians to witness publically in light of Christ’s salvific-didactic work. Christ’s work frames human responsibilities. Faithful living does not control the onset of grace, but represents an expression of necessary discipleship. As I explore below, this partnership can be understood, for instance, in the way soteriology unfolds in Christian theology in Hindi.
Hindi Christian theology can be thought of as an extended theology of relationships. On one plane, a restorative mission and a didactic mission are embedded in Christ’s life, death, and resurrection (pair I). This relation is primary in Hindi-language Christian soteriology and foundational to Hindi Christian ethics. On a second plane, a partnership between Christ’s work and human responsibility (pair II) is embedded in any interpretation of Christ’s story. This relation between Christ’s work and human responsibility flows from and depends on the dual missions of Christ. That Christ saves and teaches both enables and shapes discipleship. Soteriology in Hindi Christian theology can be, then, understood as a theology of relations – within each pair and between the pairs – that are united in Christ and expressed in the world.

Let us now turn to the first pair: Christ’s restorative and didactic missions. Masih and Peter ground their Christology in what they call a “realistic” (“yathārthāvādi”) perspective on Christ. The Gospel of Mark, our earliest source of Christ’s life, grounds Jesus in his joys, struggles, and desires. They note that in Mark Jesus scolds (1:25), takes pity (1:41; 6:34), feels tired (4:38), gets angry (8:17-21; 9:19), despairs (7:34), forgives (12:15), worries (14:33), and feels weak (14:38; 15:21). “The Christ of the Gospel according to Mark is a common human like you and us.”

The Gospel is generous also in its descriptions of Jesus’s sense of his relationship with God. The author of the Gospel uses ‘Christ’ multiple times and describes Jesus as the ‘Son of God.’ This aspect of Jesus’s being matters since Christ’s restorative mission depends on his being one with

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59. Masih and Peter, Prabhū Yeśu kī Jīvānī aur Sevākāry, 168.
60. Masih and Peter, Prabhū Yeśu kī Jīvānī aur Sevākāry, 173: Markus racit susamācār kā yīśu hamāre-āpke samān ek sādhāraṇ manusya hat.
God. He saves because he is the incarnated Son of God. “Jesus, because he is the Son of God, is one with God from a spiritual perspective.” What does “spiritual” mean, in the context of Jesus’s being?

Jesus’s relationship with God, in Masih and Peter’s construction, stems from his oneness in spirit rather than from the union of nature. Body and human nature, even if of Jesus, cannot obtain the Kingdom of God; so, while Masih and Peter are willing to accept the physical resurrection of Jesus, they reject a bodily physical ascension to heaven. Rather, “by a supernatural and mysterious process,” they write, “the dense, physical body of Jesus is transformed into a subtle, spiritual body. In the end, Jesus ascends in this subtle, spiritual body.”

The Son incarnates to liberate from sin and to proclaim the imminent Kingdom of God. God’s agency is at the forefront of Masih and Peter’s soteriology. Jesus’s restorative mission, which is primarily a function of his divinity, makes possible the conditions for his speech-acts. Key to their soteriology, however, is the inseparability of Jesus’s didactic and salvific missions.

Drawing on the Gospel of Mark they write: “Jesus Christ incarnated to do two great things. First,
to proclaim the imminence of the Kingdom of God… According to Mark, Christ’s second work is – liberation.” 66 Christ comes to preach the Kingdom of God, a time when God’s justice and righteousness will rule peoples’ hearts. 67

Conspicuously different from Masih and Peter’s position, Khan places the onus of Christ’s restorative mission on his humanity. For Khan, only a human could “compensate” for human sin. God really forsakes Jesus on the cross. Khan considers Jesus to be fully divine and fully human, yet he chooses to focus on Christ’s humanity as the medium of salvation. It is Christ’s humanity that allows us to connect with God. On the cross, Christ’s human nature bears the effects of sin. Christ’s humanity becomes the medium of our salvation. Christ’s death breaks the power of death and sin, and humans can now live in new ways. 68

For both Masih and Peter, and for Khan, a didactic force pulsates through the story of Christ. Jesus Christ’s life and ministry consists in “doing his father’s work”: to proclaim the imminent Kingdom of God. This kingdom stands for a new way of relationships with God and fellow-humans. According to Khan, this difference between Jesus’s self-understood mission – to preach

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66. Masih and Peter, Prabhu Yeśu kī Jīvānī aur Sevākāry, 177: Markus racit susamācār ke anusār prabhu yīśu masīh do mahān kāry karne ke lie dehādhārī huā. Pahalā kāry hai – paramēśvar ke rāj y ke niṣṭā hone kī ghoṣānā (1:15)…. Markus ke anusār masīh kā dāsrā kāry hai - chudautī. Here Masih and Peter reverse my schema – they locate proclamation before liberation where I have described the salvific and didactic missions of Christ – but they do so while quoting Mark. Their commentary on Mark, however, locates the fulfillment of the proclamation and liberation in the death and resurrection of Jesus. (Masih and Peter, Prabhu Yeśu kī Jīvānī aur Sevākāry, 177)


68. Khan, Māno Yā Na Māno, 191-92: “God is holy, holy, holy and Jesus was sinless. For us [Jesus] became sin. Sin and holiness cannot be together. Due to this reason there was not a rupture in the relation between the Father and the Son but separated from the Father, surrounded by the forces of sin, to sacrifice himself for the salvation of humans. Jesus was hanging alone on the cross. Only a human could recompense for the sin of humans….The work to finish Satan’s power and reign was complete.” (Parameśvar pavitr pavitr pavitr hai aur yīśu nispāp thā. Hamare lie pāp banā. Pāp aur pavitrātā donoṁ sāth nahiṁ ho sakte. Is kāraṇ pitā aur putr ke madhy āpsī riśtoṁ meṁ darār hī nhāṁ āi parantu pitā se prthak ho pāp kī saktīyoṁ se ghirā huā manusy ke uddhār ke lie apnā balīdān dene ke lie yīśu akelā hī krūs par latkā huā thā. Manusy ke pāp kī kshatipūrti manusy hī de saktā thā…. Śaitān kī tākat aur uske rājy ko samāpt karne kā kām pūrā ho gayā.)
a form of human relationships with God and fellow-humans – and the expectations of the Jewish
leaders of Jesus’s time – for a Jewish political establishment – was “a primary reason” for
disagreements between Jesus and the leaders.  

As a God-man (“Īśvar-manuṣy”) Jesus knew his
mission and taught an ethical truth. The new revelation (“nayā prakāśan”) of Christ put God
first and proclaimed how God helps humans walk on the path of ethical completeness.

A RESPONSIBILITY TO WITNESS

Christ’s restorative and didactic missions create the conditions for a robust human response to
Christ’s work. Sometimes the link in Hindi Christian materials between “being saved” and
“accepting Christ” is so strong that a Christian life may come across as a necessary condition for
Christ’s presence. In the words of the hymn Dil Merā Le Le, Pyāre Yīśu (“Take my Heart, O
Dear Jesus”), for instance, only a clean and uncluttered heart can hold Christ. Similarly, the
anonymous hymnist of Hymn # 409 in Ārādhănā ke Gīt lists a litany of tasks incumbent on a
devotee of Christ who wants to “climb the holy mountain and be there forever”:

Tere ghar mein, he prabhū! Kaun surakṣit rahegā
Kaun pavītṛ parvat par caḍh ke sadā rahegā.

In your house, O Lord! Who will be safe
Who will climb the holy mountain and be there forever

1. Sīdhī cāl kā calnevālā, dharm ke kāṁ kā jo kartā,
Apne man se sac boltā, cuglī nahīṁ kartā.

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69. Khan, Māno Yā Na Māno, 33.
70. Khan, Māno Yā Na Māno, 45.
71. Khan, Māno Yā Na Māno, 89-90.
72. Ārādhănā ke Gīt, #311. An emphasis on the relationship between the restorative and didactic elements of the gospel is not unique to Hindi Christian materials and can also be found in English works that address Christianity in India (e.g., see, Amaladoss, The Asian Jesus; and, Premkumar, “The Commonwealth of Dalits and Tribals”). The strong relationship between those elements, however, is a particular (though not exclusive) feature of Hindi Christian works.
One who walks the straight path, one who does the works of faith,  
Who tells truth with his mind, and never tells tales.

2. *Aur jo kisī dūsre se burāī nahīṁ kartā*  
*Na apne paḍosī kī vah nīndā kabhī suntā.*

And who does not do evil to another,  
Nor suffers those who scorn his neighbor.

3. *Jis ke lie burā puruś hai nikammā ṭhahrā,*  
*Par yahovā ke ḍarvaiyōṁ kā vah ādar kartā.*

For whom a bad person is useless,  
But who respects those who fear God.

4. *Vacan de, phir hāni dekhe, taubhī na badaltā,*  
*Kiśī ko udhār se de kar kabhī byāj na letā.*

Having given his word, then seeing a loss, even then does not change,  
Having given a loan to someone does not charge interest.

5. *Nirdoṣ ke satāne nimitt ghūs na kabhī letā,*  
*Aisā kām jo kartā hai, sadā hī rahegā.*

Never takes a bribe that will harm the innocent,  
One who does such deeds, will remain [there] forever.

In this hymn, theology and ethics go hand in hand: to speak of the acceptance of Christ – as one  
who finds herself in the Lord’s home – is to speak of concrete discipleship. Only those who live  
by certain ethical ideas – some of which are mentioned in the hymn – will one find safety in the  
house of the Lord. One who does not cheat or lie, respects God’s people, tells the truth, is true to  
his word, does not charge interest on loans (in other words, helps others financially without  
expecting monetary benefits in return), does not harm the innocent – even though, it seems, the  
hymnist accepts briberies as a regular state of affairs – will climb the holy mountain and stay  
there forever.
Other Hindi Christian materials, like short stories, also echo this theme of human responsibility – for example, the responsibility to serve the needy, to be honest, and to witness even when facing persecution. D’Mello’s collection, as mentioned above, comprises didactic stories that illustrate these principals through common-sense interpretations of biblical verses. In one particular story, the responsibility to live an ethical life – in this case, by serving the poor – trumps spending time with Christ.

He was the resident of a religious house. It was his job [literally, “duty”] to help the poor who gathered at the temple door for assistance. One day, as he was getting ready to leave for work, Christ appeared to him in a vision. He now had to choose whether to stay with the Christ who had appeared or to do his duty to help the poor. He chose to fulfill his duty. It had become dark by the time he returned to his room after helping the poor. As soon as he lit the lamp, Jesus appeared again. Seeing Jesus he was overcome with joy. Jesus said to him, “If you had not gone to fulfill your duty, I would have left from this place.”

A few things are worth noting. First, the choice between spending time with Jesus and helping the poor is dramatic. From the resident’s response to seeing Christ again – “[s]eeing Jesus he was overjoyed” – it is clear that he did not think less of spending time with Christ and was very happy that he could now spend time with Jesus at the end of the day. In the context of the story, not only is the resident happy to see Jesus again but is happier – “overjoyed” – to encounter Jesus in the night now that he has fulfilled his day-job assisting the poor. In the morning, however, fulfilling the duty was more important. Second, the story suggests the resident faced a risky decision: the story implies Jesus’s reappearance depended on the resident’s choice. Further, Jesus’s reappearance is a reminder of another lesson from the story: service to others and fellowship with Jesus are not contradictory ways to be Christian. The biblical verse

73. D’Mello, Īśvāṇī kā Sāthī, Story #68, 33-34: Vah maṭhvāsī thā. Uskā kām maṭh ke dvār par jo bhī garīb madad ke lie āye uskī sahāyātā karnā thā. Ek din jaise hī vah kām ke lie nikal hī rahā thā kī īsā ne use darśan diye. Use ab cunnā thā kī vah darśan mein dikhe īsā ke sāth rahe yā garībōṁ kī madad ke lie kartavy par lage rahe. Usne kartavy pālan karnā cun liyā. Garībōṁ kī madad kar jab vah apne kamre mein lautā to amdherā ho calā thā. Jaise hī usne dīp jalāyā īsā ā khade hue. Īsā ko dekkhar vah ănand se fūlā na samāyā. Īsā ne usse kahā, “agar tum kartavy pālan ke lie nahīṁ nikalte to main yahāṁ se calā jāā.”
that accompanies the story makes this clear: “And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family,[a] you did it to me’.” (Matt. 25:40; NRSV) Service (in the day) makes fellowship (in the night) more enjoyable.

In the story’s chronology, service precedes fellowship with Christ. Fourth, the story tells its readers that our actions influence how Christ relates to us. D’Mello’s title for this story is, “I Would Have Left” (Main Calā Jātā). As Christ puts it, ‘I would have left if you had not left for work.’ It is important to fulfill one’s religious duty; even further, doing so endears one to Christ.

Another account, titled “Truth” (Saccāī), is an interpretation of Psalm 26:2: “Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and mind.” (NRSV) The story goes:

A new servant was being tested. While paying the salary, the master gave 10-10 rupee notes and slipped in an extra 10 rupee note. When the servant counted the money, an extra 10 rupee note was found. He said to the master, “There are an extra 10 rupees. Take these.” The master praised the honesty of the servant and asked him to keep the 10 rupees.

Then there is Param-Prasād (“The Eucharist”), the story of keeping the Eucharist under persecution, an interpretation of John 6:58: “This is the bread that came down from heaven, not


75. Literally, the “supreme propitiatory offering.” D’Mello’s use of “param-prasād” is interesting for a few reasons. First, it is a (polytradition) concept drawn from Hindu practices and vocabulary: prasād refers to the food offered to idols or a gift, boon, or blessing one receives as a result of the offerings to idols (McGregor, The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary, 666). Second, param-prasād is not a commonly-used word for the Eucharist or the elements of the Eucharist among Hindi-speaking Protestant Christians; the “normal” Protestant Christian word for the Eucharist in Hindi is prabhu-bhoj (literally, “meal of the Lord,” a translation of “Lord’s Supper”). However, param-prasād is regularly used in Catholic circles in India. Finally, a literal translation of param (best, highest, supreme) could suggest Christians are making a comparative claim vis-à-vis the prasād of Hindus; one is param-prasād while the other is just prasād. Such a comparative interpretation is, however, faulty because, in Catholic circles, param is taken to mean “holy.” So, in functional terms, param-prasād refers to the “holy prasād” rather than to a comparatively better (supreme or highest or best) prasād.

On a related note, the comparison between param-prasād and prabhu-bhoj deserves a lot more attention and is the topic of what I expect will be a future article or book chapter. There are many interesting issues to explore: what is the history of the use of these terms? How did they come to acquire their current usage? What is the
like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.” (NRSV)

A communist government ruled the nation. Christians were strictly prohibited from following their faith. A priest was using coded language to contact Christians. He used to inform people where to meet him, like on the side of roads, while selling goods, or while selling newspapers. When Christians bought goods from him he would pass on the Holy Communion to them [hidden] in the goods. Believers would take those elements home and would conduct the ritual of the Eucharist with their families [in the safety of their homes]. Where there is a will, there is a way.76

In Hindi Christian materials, certain basic responsibilities and practices emerge as part and parcel of accepting Christ as one’s savior. In “Truth,” for instance, the master-servant relationship readily brings to mind the call to discipleship every Christian faces. Our master – Christ – recognizes our truthfulness and rewards us for our ethical choices. The presentation of a basic Christian value – honesty – in a story on the relationships of servants to masters also reflects, I would offer, D’Mello’s attempt to ground his lesson in a phenomenon – the exchange of money between servants and householders – that is commonplace in most Indian families that can afford to hire home Helpers. In other words, by using the servant-householder relationship as his medium, D’Mello deploys a very familiar relationship to anchor his message.

Concrete forms of religious responsibilities and practices – like keeping the Eucharist, the subject of Param-Prasād – are available to a Christian through Scriptures and the interpretive theology that underpinned their development? Why do Protestant Christians and Catholic Christians use different Hindi words to communicate the Eucharist? How did these differences emerge? What are the theological, social, and historical issues at play? Are there examples of cross-use – param-prasād in Protestant circles and vice versa? My experience with Protestant and Catholic Hindi congregations in India suggests a general trend – prabhu-bhoj in Protestant Hindi congregations and param-prasād in Catholic ones. What explains this? Finally, how do these terms fit in the context of Catholic theology and Protestant theology in India concerning people of other faiths? In other words, what sort of theology of religions is being communicated in these terms?

76. D’Mello, Īśvāṇī kā Sāthī, Story #178, 87: Deś mein samyāvād kī sarkār thī. Īsāiyoṁ ko dharm pālan karnā sakht manā thā. Sāṅketik bhāṣā dvārā ek yājak īsāiyoṁ se sampark kiyā karte the. Vah logoṁ ko sācīt karte the ki ve unse kis jagah mileṁ, jaise sāra koṁ ke kīnāre, sāmān bECTe hue yā sāmācār patr bECTe. Īsāi log jah unse sāmān kharīdīte to ve sāmān ke sāth param-prasād rakhhkar de de te. Viśvāṅī us prasād ko upne ghar le jākar apne prīvāroṁ mein param-prasād svīkār karne kī vidhi racte. Jahāṁ cāh vahāṁ rāh.
attempts of the Christian communities to which a person belongs. When we study Hindi
Christian materials, we not only study why, how, and to what end Christ saves but also study
Christian ethics and enumerate forms of Christian discipleship. Christ’s restorative mission is
inseparably tied to a didactic mission, which points a believer to discipleship. To be “saved from
sin” implies concrete ethical injunctions to refrain from ills like drunkenness and gambling, and
to be good parents, live uprightly, be gracious, work diligently, and witness to Christ (Samraj,
2011). Responsible living is embedded in Hindi Christian literature, appearing in a variety of
materials addressed to general and specific groups like children, women and men (e.g., Lal 1970,
and James 1978), pastors (Kurien 2008), bishops (Jonathan 1994), lay leaders (Prince 1997), and
evangelists (Howell 2006).

Since Hindi Christian discipleship must function in a multi-faith context and Hindi cultural
world where a Christian’s primary neighbors are Hindus – as Anand reminds his readers, we are
called to serve in the Hindi heartland of the nation – the relation between Hindi and Christianity,
the role of discipleship in the formation of faith, and recognition of the ways in which Christian
speech-acts are perceived by society-at-large have come to occupy the attention of Hindi
Christian authors. The social implications of a believer’s response to Christ’s work drive Hindi
theo-ethics and have shaped Hindi Christian materials. Understanding this development will be
the task of the next three chapters.
Chapter Three

Theology and Language
When Christian missionaries reached the Hindi-speaking regions of the Central Provinces, they found an active language scene. Language was integral to local cultures and linked to local pride in food, dress, history, and community. Consolidating the various kingdoms and principalities into a federal nation was more challenging due to the presence of so many powerful regional languages. Vallabhbhai Patel, whom Nehru tasked to convince the various principalities to join the newly formed nation, struggled frequently with the question of language: would India have one language? How could we accept the tyranny of Hindi or English in our region? While Hindi was spoken widely in the north of India, southern Indians spoke Tamil or Telugu or Malayalam. Oriya in the east, Punjabi and Gujarati in the west, in addition to the hundreds of tribal languages and local dialects made for a grand range of local cultures.

Languages in modern India carry with them centuries of group identity and culture. As Ramachandra Guha notes, modern India’s long history of loyalty to linguistic and cultural traditions accounts for the strength of its regional identities.\(^1\) Language has also served as a tool to consolidate political power and ideologies, a consolidation to which the Hindi movement of the nineteenth century contributed. As Christopher King notes in his excellent study, the Hindi movement was part of a “process of multi-symbol congruence” of language, religion, and nationalism that transformed old equations. “Urdu = Muslim + Hindu and Hindi = Hindu + Muslim” became “Urdu = Muslim and Hindi = Hindu.”\(^2\) Christian materials in Hindi challenge the claims for such alignments. Hindu nationalists may have adopted Hindi and produced slogans like ‘Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan,’’ but their legacy and politics shared public space with the centuries-old legacy and politics of Christian uses of Hindi.

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\(^1\) Guha, *India After Gandhi*.

Political contests over language are familiar to Indians but, as political scientists like Sunil Khilnani\(^3\) and Ashutosh Varshney\(^4\) have shown, language has not played a powerful role in destabilizing India’s democracy. Rather, linguistic loyalties have led to some interesting political alignments. On the one hand, linguistic organization after independence successfully prevented regional power centers tied to language and culture from tearing the young nation apart. On the other hand, the gradual shift of political power from single-party central rule to region-led national coalitions can be attributed in no small part to linguistic identities. Language has, as Varshney notes, surprisingly led to a minimal amount of communal violence compared to other motivators like caste, religion, and poverty.\(^5\) Varshney’s ‘surprise’ is understandable. His conclusions build on identifying major motivators of communal violence and he is aware that such catalysts do not function in isolation. The surprise comes, then, from evaluating data on communal violence to discover that compared to religion and caste, language has accounted for a share of communal violence that is disproportionate to the size and influence of language-based groups in India.

Given its ability to unite and consolidate, linguistic affinity has also taken the form of an ideology in India. Of religions-as-ideologies, Ashis Nandy writes, they function as “a sub-national, national or cross-national identifier of populations contesting for or protecting non-religious, usually political or socioeconomic, interests.”\(^6\) Something similar can be said of languages in India. They act as identifiers of populations contesting or protecting political or socioeconomic interests. Jawaharlal Nehru and other secularists considered the state’s non-
alignment with languages and religions a cardinal policy. But this approach ran aground in India. At the beginning of the twentieth century, ‘Hindi imperialism’ was acutely felt in linguistic areas like Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. Hindi-Hindu and Urdu-Muslim alignments played an important role in India’s partition in the middle of that century. India remains conflicted on a national language – Hindi may be a national language, at least according to Article 343 of the Constitution, but for all practical purposes one is better off using English outside the Hindi belt. Given the widespread embrace of linguistic and religious identities in the public realm, Nehru's version of secularism has failed to keep with India.

While it is possible to speak of a Sanskrit, Urdu, or English cosmopolis, when modern Hindi Christian authors write in Hindi, they are participants in an ongoing history of linguistic and religious alignment that continues at the national and regional levels. When Christian missionaries sought to introduce their faith, it was both natural and in a way necessary for them to turn to the language(s) that prevailed in the local context: namely Hindi and its dialects. Hindi authors and translators in Independent India have continued this proud tradition of writing and producing Christian texts in Hindi.

However, such a practice should also be understood in light of the challenge it poses to cultural and religious narratives that seek to align a language primarily with one religion over others. To the extent that Hindi Christian literature exists diachronically and synchronically across India’s history and geography, it does not constitute a break from the cultural communication and self-

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7. King, One Language, Two Scripts, 173-76.
8. Nandy, Time Warps, 73-76.
understanding of Christian writers and hymnodists in other Indian languages. But it does signify a radical embrace of the *lingua franca* for the sake of educating the population and communicating a religious message.

Christian writings in Hindi that are studied in this project belong to the post-Independence era in India, from the mid-twentieth century onwards. Their lineage stretches, however, to Christian works in vernacular Hindi produced earlier by missionaries and publication houses. Going back at least 100 years, a recognizable quality can be found in the writings used for these texts. Consider these three versions of Matthew 1:18 in Hindi that span nearly 95 years:


11. “Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit” (NRSV).


An ordinary speaker or scholar of modern standard Hindi can read and understand the birth narrative of Jesus in these three Hindi Bibles without specialized skills. This is not surprising. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Khari Boli-based Hindustani was in widespread use in central and north India, taken beyond its home in north India through merchants and the reach of the Mughal Empire. In 1860, by the time John Gilchrist at the College of Fort William (1800-1852) was promoting Christian prose in Urdu, and in Hindi based on colloquial Khari Boli, he was building on nearly a half-century of Hindi language publications by mission centers in central and north India.

With the incorporation of the Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge as an independent and autonomous body under the Societies Registration Act of 1860 and the formation of the Hindi Theological Literature Committee in 1954, Indian Christian literature in general and Hindi Christian literature in particular acquired powerful sponsors. Today, H.T.L.C. is the largest producer of Hindi Christian literature and materials and I.S.P.C.K. its national and international distributor. From the earliest educational attempts to modern theological texts, the history of Hindi Christian theology can be traced through responses to three related catalysts, namely, the need to provide (religious) education, raise an “Indian” Christian church and

17. The College thrived for seven years after its founding, then started a gradual but steady decline, ceased to function in 1852 when the last scholar left, and was officially dissolved on 24 January 1854 by Lord Dalhousie, then the Governor-General of India. Das, *Sahibs and Munshis*, 94-103.
theology, and find a Christian voice distinguishable from missionary forerunners. In view of these developments, then, this chapter will address three issues: Why translate? Why Hindi? And, how to translate? To answer these questions, I will examine the use of Hindi by Christians in India, tracing missionary antecedents and conversations regarding vernacularization. I will then examine how Hindi came to acquire its place in projects to vernacularize and the form of vernacularization we find in Hindi Christian texts. To ground this analysis of Christian uses of Hindi in the context of Hindi Christian texts, in the second part of this chapter I will explore two related issues. I will examine the strategies to vernacularize at play in Hindi Christian texts. Finally, I will offer a study of two noticeable ways in which Christians in India have used Hindi – their use of dehādhāraṇ and their use of polytraditional words as found in Hindi Christian texts.

Through its various phases, vernacular Christian literature has sought to transmit ideas to those of different cultures and languages. Like Syrian and Catholic attempts to communicate in other linguistic regions, Hindi-speaking Christians exercised great care and deliberation when attempting to carry across – trans-latio – ideas between Christianity and Hinduism. Without conceptual equivalence, translations needed selective distance from local contexts and have interpretive mobility. As I show below, care and mobility aptly describe two key features of Hindi-language Christian literature and the case study in translation that concerns this essay.

21. Nearly 40 percent of Indians use standard Hindi or one of its cognates and Hindi is used as a language of theology by Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and people of other faiths. As a particular language used by religious communities to communicate and record claims about god and existence, theology in Hindi is not exclusively Christian in nature. However, in my research it refers exclusively to theological production and communication in the context of the Christian faith traditions.

explores these aspects in light of the ways in which Hindi-speaking Christians have deployed translation choices.

**WHY TRANSLATE: CHRISTIAN USES OF HINDI**

Hindi’s relation to Christianity can be traced to the use of Hindi as a language of instruction by missionaries settled in the eastern and central parts of colonial India. The Serampore trio – William Carey, a shoemaker and later Baptist minister; John Marshman, a school teacher; and, William Ward, a printer – of the Bengal-based Baptist Missionary Society (1792) were at the front of this trend. Bible translations, Christian instruction, and language-training provided early forms of contact between Hindi and Christian ideas. The Serampore Trio soon realized the value of using Hindi as a language for secular and theological instruction. Hindi language-training in missionary schools provided a platform for Christian instruction. At the same time, the commitment to proselytize was supported by the use of local languages and idioms.

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23. On November 25, 1800, a Hindu named Fakira approached the Mission for ‘examination’ as a Christian – a process through which non-Christians were tested on their readiness to be Christian. However, as the story goes, after his exam Fakira returned to his village and never came back. As a result, a certain Krishna Pal, a carpenter from the suburbs of Serampore, ended up being the first convert of the Bengal Mission. The Periodical Account of the Indian Mission to its London Headquarters in 1801 includes Fakira’s story, as reported by John Sutcliff based on the personal diary of Daniel Brunsdon:

_This has been a memorable day indeed! The first Hindoo, named Fakīra, came before the Church. His answers were ready, simple, and satisfactory. He has for some time heard brother Thomas at Beerbhoom; and has lately come down to us at Seramour. Brother Carey interrogated him in Bengallee, and afterwards interpreted, as [they] could not understand all his answers. I can only note down a few questions and answers. How do you expect salvation? A. From the mercy of God in Christ. How came you first to think about God and your soul? A. From hearing Mr. Thomas speak God’s word, and the gospel; I thought nothing about it before. Q. If we should not be willing to receive you, what do you intend to do? Will you go back to your old way of living, and serve the debts? A. No! If you do not receive me, I will take my book, and go about telling the Hindoos of this great Saviour; and if you do not give me any thing to eat, God will. – Every one was well satisfied with what he said. The meeting closed with prayer by brother Carey in Bengallee, and by brother Thomas in English._ (Yale Digital Library Collection, digcoll 183956, 106)

Sutcliff, a Baptist minister in Olney, North Buckinghamshire, mentored William Carey and other missionaries including Brunsdon, who wrote him the account from India.
Such vernacularization was as integral to missionary efforts as were social work, medical assistance, and monetary help. Missionaries sought local languages to proselytize even as they taught English. In some cases, they devised written texts conducive to their purpose. For instance, among the Gonds in Padhar in central Madhya Pradesh, the British missionary Clemet F. Moss devised a written script for Gondi and used it to introduce Christianity in 1939. In other cases, local languages were adopted and adapted for translations, instruction, and preaching.

What was true for Moss in Padhar was also the case for Hindi writers in British India. By 1912 Hindi Christian literature had merited a catalogue in the survey of vernacular Christian literature by the National Missionary Council for India (now the National Council of Churches in India). This catalogue was expanded and republished in 1917. North Indian poets like Tulsi Das and Kabir Das had “proved the capabilities of Hindi to convey religious truths,” and missionaries of the time claimed that what was possible in verse was also possible in prose. Of the 490 Christian publications in Hindi listed in 1917, 21 had Indian authors and the largest bulk of publications (59) were “Books dealing with Hinduism.” With titles like Bhāg kā Brittānt (“What is Fate”), Dharma Kasauṭi (“Touchstone of Religion”), Shāstra Parikshā (“The True Shatras”) and Pāp Shodhan Siddhānt (“The True Atonement”), many of these books refuted the objections of Hindus to Christianity, ‘exposed’ the insufficiency of Hindu soteriology, and compared Hinduism unfavorably to Christianity.

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24. Moss, a medical doctor, shaped Gondi, translated parts of the Gospels into Gondi, and established Padhar Hospital. He was also an avid hunter and traveler. His work among the Gonds has been chronicled by, among others, Robert C. Ruark, a journalist who wrote accounts of his visits to Moss (Ruark 1962a, 1962b, 1962c).
Conversion and responses to Hindus were not the only topics of Hindi Christian literature. The catalogue recorded Bible commentaries, biographies of Christ and St. Paul, concordances, synoptics, dictionaries and textual aids, theology and catechisms, homiletic works, church histories, apologetics, prayer books, devotionals, hymnbooks, sermon collections, books on health and hygiene, missionary biographies, life-guides for men, women, and children, school textbooks, magazines, and periodicals.

The Baptists in Serampore were not the only ones producing these materials. And so, in addition to references to 490 Christian works in Hindi, the 1917 catalogue also listed 13 publishing houses located throughout north and central India. There was the Methodist press in Lucknow, the Lutheran and Anglican presses in Ranchi, the Baptist press in Calcutta, a Presbyterian press in Mhow, and a Disciples press in Jabalpur. Foreign publishers were also active in the region, like the London-based Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Literature Committee of the Evangelical National Missionary Society of Sweden, which published Moss’s Gondi grammar book in 1950. German Lutheran missionaries from Berlin had reached Ranchi in Chotanagpur in 1845 and over the next century many mission agencies shaped the region: the Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Mission, the Society for the Promotion of the Gospel, the Scottish Free Church Mission, and the Dublin University Mission. Protestant missionaries were not the only Hindi Christian presses in colonial central and north India.

Catholic missions and publications were also widespread. In 1534, for instance, the Episcopal See of Goa was created and Catholic missionaries were sent to minister to local Christians – Portuguese soldiers and merchants, Armenians in Mughal courts – and preach to non-Christians. In north-central India, Agra was the focal point of Jesuit work dating to the time of Akbar's reign (1556-1605 C.E.). In 1579, Akbar invited Jesuit Fathers from Goa to his court in Agra, and in 1620, during the reign of Jehangir, Jesuit missionaries were invited to Patna and established a church there in addition to the one they had established in Agra. Belgian Jesuit Catholic missionaries first reached Chotanagpur in central India in 1868, preceded in the east by Jesuit Mission in Bengal.

In central India, Gond kings ruled various kingdoms in what is now Madhya Pradesh and eastern Maharashtra. Chhindwara and Nagpur became centers of Gond rule and in 1679 Fr. Philip de Faria was sent from the Catholic mission in Patna to Nagpur. Catholic ministers knowledgeable in Hindi were serving at Sardhana-Meerut (c. 1820), Jabalpur (1845), Kamptee (1849), Chhattisgarh (1852), and Thana (c. 1865) among other Hindi-speaking regions. They set up churches, schools, and convents that taught English and Christian instruction in Hindi.

31. Sharma, *Christian Missions in North India*, 16.
35. Tete, *Constant Lievens*, 57.
Vernaculars like Hindi, however, were not everyone's choice as the language of general instruction.

As Alexander Duff’s 1840 survey of Indian missions shows, the question of indigenous schools was on the minds of missionaries. Vernaculars were being taught in hundreds of village schools. Duff reports that Brahmans and middle castes would teach or hire someone to teach their and their neighbors’ sons. Religion was taught at home. Since the acquisition of the spoken and written alphabet was the goal of private education, these schools turned-over pupils frequently as children would invariably leave once they “could read, write, and cipher a little.”\(^{41}\) Teaching in vernaculars created another challenge. Only the children of those who could not afford private education, i.e., the lower and middle castes, would come to schools runs by missionaries. Meager retention rates and social hierarchies curtailed the ability of missionary schools to prepare students for “higher Christian Institution.”\(^{42}\) In addition, teaching and converting lower members of society did not translate into influence on those leading and shaping India. A significant number of missionaries found this problematic, since they sought not just to evangelize and convert but also to shape India in light of Christian and Western values.\(^{43}\)

Which language would, then, “prove the most effective instrument of a large, liberal, and enlightened education? – the best primary medium of conveying the literature, science, and Christian theology of Europe to those who by their instruction and example are to be the teachers and guides of their countrymen?”\(^{44}\) While Carey and his ilk – whom Duff dismissed as

\(^{41}\) Duff, *India and India Missions*, 536.
\(^{42}\) Duff, *India and India Missions*, 538.
\(^{43}\) Ingleby, *Missionaries, Education and India*.
\(^{44}\) Duff, *India and India Missions*, 542.
“Christian philanthropists” – chose vernaculars and translations, for Duff and his Scottish partners, only English could be the “most effective medium of Indian illumination – the best and ampest channel for speedily letting in the full stream of European knowledge on the minds of those … destined to influence and direct the national intellect and heart of India.”

Dubbed “Anglomaniacs” by their critics, these missionaries had recognized that language was not simply a way to communicate but a repository of culture and values. English was Christian while, from their context in Calcutta, Bengali and Sanskrit were Hindu; the way a native acquiring the latter would “become indoctrinated into a false system,” i.e., Hinduism, a native acquiring English would, by the very act of grasping new terms, be “perpetually brought in contact with the new ideas, the new truths, of which these terms are the symbols and representatives.” Given such arguments, why would certain missionaries continue to teach and write Christian ideas in Hindi at all?

**WHY HINDI?**

From the earliest stages it is clear that Hindi served as a ‘bridge’ language: its instruction – e.g., at the influential College of Fort William – gave civil servants and missionaries a foothold

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47. Though described as an important centre of Indian studies due to its pioneering work, the College’s influence on the development of Indian literature has been questioned. The College community itself produced works limited to grammar books, dictionaries, fables, and historical narratives, and translated books into English for the benefit of students and administrators. The College published 130 books, the largest number of which were in Hindustani or Urdu-Hindi (37), followed by Sanskrit (24), Arabic (20), Bengali and Persian (18 each), and Marathi (6). There were 2 books in Chinese and 1 each published in Burmese, Kannada, Oriya, Panjabi, and Telugu. Das, *Sahibs and Munshis*, 154-64; Augustine, *Fort William*, 166-68. The College, however, also served as a substantial patron of authors and poets in a variety of Indian languages and the influence of this support on the development of
among the local public, and running schools in Hindi provided the missionaries a valuable means to support their mission. Such practical applications, however, were not the only reasons for using Hindi. Religious education and the composition of Christian communities were also a factor. So, for instance, early charters of College of Fort William stressed ethical formation in addition to civil training under the belief that “the solution to Indian social problems lay in its evangelization.”

Missionary commitment to preaching and proselytizing, along with a secondary commitment to schooling and education, helped Hindi acquire institutional support as a language of mass communication. The educational interests of the British Government of India and missionaries were largely cooperative. The Government held itself responsible for the moral and material progress of Indians through education while disassociating itself from religious teaching, a task it left largely to Christian missions. But through the persistence of Scottish missionaries like Alexander Duff and John Wilson, the Government cooperated with missions. Duff and Wilson were not the only ones arguing for such cooperation. Already in the 1830s and 1840s, for example, the East India Company government in the Punjab and U.P. was supporting missionary sponsored education. Some of it was in English, some in the vernaculars.

By the early twentieth century, schools managed by Christian missions received financial and administrative support as part of the Government’s wide educational program. Translations of Indian literature is generally recognized in research on the College of Fort William. E.g., see Das, Sahibs and Munshis, ix, 112-18. Das, Sahibs and Munshis, 8. Mayhew, Christianity and the Government of India, 160-161. Mayhew (1878-1948), a Classics Master at Eton's in the 1920s and an educator in the Colonial Education Service, was Director of Public Instruction, Central Provinces, India. An Oxford graduate, he was first assigned to Madras in India in 1903, was Deputy Director of...
the Bible and the Gospels into Hindi accompanied the work of such schools and many early Christians saw themselves in service of education, health, and social development as much as they were committed to evangelizing and raising local churches. The use of Hindi, then, as well as bringing practical benefits, was also driven by religious education. Usage was also given a boost as a result of the serious challenges presented to the ecclesiastical interests of missionaries by other catalysts. Particular among these catalysts was a strong pull on the use of vernaculars exerted by the changing demographics of an increasingly Indianizing Christianity.

The missionaries were divided along denominational and theological lines, a division that colored decisions on the relation of the gospel to local languages. As chronicled in Duff’s history, a tussle between vernacularists and anglophiles broke out on philosophical grounds in the 1830s and 1840s. Nevertheless for these missionaries, to raise an Indian church, as Ingleby notes, “education was the key – Christian education of course – especially if that meant knowledge of the Christian Scriptures.” This commitment to religious education itself was shaped not only due to a religio-political alignment but also due to the changing demographics of an increasingly Indianized Christianity in India. If the first phase, then, of Hindi Christian literature tried to adapt exogenous cultural elements on practical and theological grounds, a second phase sought to “revive the indigenous.”

Further, and in a related development, missionary Christian communities drew people from a wide demographic, the majority coming from lower castes and classes that were subject to social,

50. Ingleby, Missionaries, Education and India, 3.
51. Nandy, At the Edge of Psychology, 57-59; see also, Ingleby, Missionaries, Education and India, 12-13.
religious, and economic discrimination. This resulted in the increased use of vernaculars for Christian worship and liturgy, the support for and acceptance of Indian missionaries, and alignment with India’s Independence movement. Indigenization and the use of vernacular language became rallying issues for central Indian churches, a growing number of whose members shared lower socio-economic status and Dalit backgrounds.

The increasing number of such converts was in turn a reflection of both mission needs and geographic realities. Most missionary activity started in the cities, which were better supplied and connected due to transport and communication networks, and gradually extended to surrounding villages and towns. The introduction of the railways further increased connections between cities as well as facilitating missionary work in rural areas. By the early 1830s, the British Baptists and American Presbyterians had begun work in the British North-Western Provinces. After 1862, Anglican missionary work, which had started in Calcutta, Secunderabad, and Meerut, spread to smaller towns like Itawa, Jhansi, Gwalior, Orcha, Sagar, Ranipur, and Mahu. By 1881, the Presbyterians had extended their missionary work to areas in Farukhabad, Punjab, and north India, covering vast Hindi-speaking regions.

While large populations were within the sphere of missionary activity, the number of converts was quite low. Dissatisfied with the result of their efforts to evangelize in city streets and market places, and in response to the need to expand mission fields, missionary activity moved to villages and towns, where most potential converts were from Dalit backgrounds. By 1931, five

52. Sahu, *The Church of North India*, 9.
53. Sahu, *The Church of North India*, 101-03.
of every six Indian Christians were rural. But missionaries were not the only drivers of the expansion of the Indian church. With assistance from the pioneering work of G. A. Oddie and Duncan Forrester on the attitude of Protestant missionaries toward caste, John Webster has shown how large-scale conversions among Dalits were not so much driven by the missionaries but initiated by Dalit leaders.

In Punjab, for instance, the Christian population grew from 3,912 in 1881 to 395,629 in 1931 mostly due to conversion by lower-caste Chuhra leaders who then convinced members of the community to convert. In Uttar Pradesh, Mazhabi Sikhs and their leaders near Moradabad approached local Methodist missionaries in 1859. This was followed by conversions among Bhangis and Chamars. By 1931, U.P. had 173,077 Christians, most of whom were Dalits. In Andhra Pradesh, the Malas converted in the thousands in the 1840s-80s, so did the Madigas and Sudras. In Madhya Pradesh, most of the converts were not Dalits but people from the Gond and Bhil tribes. Where earlier in their plans for India missionaries sought to convert elites, by the beginning of the twentieth century the church raised by missionaries was, demographically at least, dominated by marginalized and oppressed members of society.

57. Webster is critical of the term “mass movement,” popularized by Pickett's Christian Mass Movement in India (1933), whose distinguishing features are a group decision in favor of Christianity and the “consequent preservation of the converts' social integration” (Pickett, Christian Mass Movements in India, 22). Webster argues the conversions were neither the product of group think nor did they succeed in preserving the converts’ social integration. He prefers “large-scale conversions” to highlight the personal choice central to the act of conversion and the converts’ move from an assigned social hierarchy to a “new ‘mixed’ community of unclear social status” (Webster, The Dalit Christians, 45).
58. Webster, The Dalit Christians, 47.
Given this demographic context, the use of vernaculars in general, and Hindi in particular, served the Indian church well. Vernaculars proved an efficient means to connect people to the Gospels and Christian education. The same applied to Hindi and its cognates, because the ways in which people encountered Christian ideas were gradual and by no means clear-cut. Post-conversion, in many cases new Christians continued to live in their communities (be they villages, towns, or cities), interact with their neighbors, face caste-based discrimination, and – as research by Sebastian Kim has shown⁶⁰ – negotiate the ground between their first religious tradition (which in most cases was a form of Hindu, Dalit, or tribal traditions) and Christianity.

These ongoing negotiations resulted in linguistic strategies that defy easy characterizations as being assimilated within or distant from the broader religious languages of the region. Richard Eaton’s study of Sufis in the Deccan, as an instance, reveals the gradual adoption of Islamic theologies and practices among the Dakani-speakers of the region.⁶¹ Tony Stewart similarly highlights the casual and ongoing way in which religious communities interacted in the region of Bengal.⁶² While individual and mass conversions contain an element of radical change, gradual adaption best describes the approach by Christians in the region toward their Hindu environment.

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⁶⁰ Kim, In Search of Identity, 35-36, 190-200.
⁶¹ Compare Richard M. Eaton’s 1974 study of the expansion of Indian Islam in “Sufi Folk Literature and the Expansion of Indian Islam,” History of Religion, 127. Eaton contends that the Sufis of the Deccan made “no conscious effort” to gain non-Muslim followers and hence cannot be called missionaries seeking conversions akin to that of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Christianity movement in India. He describes “conversion,” which has been aligned with Christian missionary activity, as a sort of “self-conscious, sudden and total change of belief” and hence “inadequate” to describe the “process” by which Sufis of the Deccan found non-Muslim followers. Rather than a sudden conversion to Islam, these followers are “still undergoing a gradual process of Islamic acculturation” (Eaton, “Sufi Folk Literature, 127). This study of Hindi Christians questions Eaton's ascription of Christian conversion as sudden and total change. Gradual acculturation – in theology, practice, and liturgy – better explain the ongoing transformation of Hindi-language Christian communities in India.
**HOW TO TRANSLATE: AN INTRODUCTION**

When a language is taken to be coterminous or precisely descriptive of the tradition it supports, it can seem to reify that tradition’s values and claims. As Stewart rightly notes, the problem of syncretism – and reification – in the study of religion stems partly from the association of languages with religions – like Sanskrit with Hindu, Hindi with Hindu, Urdu with Muslim, and Marathi with Brahmin – and partly from the presentation of religions as monolithic (say “Christian” and “Hindu”) that find expression in texts. While a focus on texts needs to be balanced with careful attention to the materials of the unlettered and to non-textual sources, studies in translation need and can avoid the problem of reification in vernaculars.

“Hybrid” texts that use ideas and terms across religious traditions in attempts at conceptual equivalence⁶³ should not be taken naively as complete and final expressions of religious values. Since the values underlying such vernaculars and translations are available in the constituent parts of such forms – i.e., in both the ‘home’ tradition and the ‘new’ tradition – the shared nature of such values belie the claim that the home and new traditions constitute mutually exclusive expressions. Caution with claims of conceptual equivalence enriches our understanding of vernacularizations and translations as attempts to build bridges and recognize ‘excess’ rather than to arrest change or photocopy ideas.

“Vernacular” has been variously described as “the language or dialect spoken by the ordinary people in a particular country or region” (OED), one’s “mother tongue” (a complex idea for multilingual children), the terminology specific to a group (say that of engineers or theologians),

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and a reference to a thing domestic and quotidian rather than grand and worldly. Vernacular in common usage marks the ordinary from the grand, the local from the universal, and the general from the special and the specialized. Michael Allen's recent work on *The Ocean of Inquiry*, a text in a vernacular then common but now specialized, captures the changing status of vernaculars through development and standardization. Niścaldās, the author of the *Inquiry*, wrote in the vernacular of his day but “today it takes a specialist to read Niścaldās.”

As a type of vernacularization, of which translation is one method, Hindi-language Christian literature contains borrowed or adapted ideas, neologisms, and creative thinking. As an example, the colloquial use of non-honorific divine address – useful when trying to communicate the Gospels in the vernacular and in oral rather than written form – has found a counterpart in honorific divine addresses in modern translations of the Hindi Bible, which, unlike their predecessors, have sought to create conceptual parity with the honorific way in which neighboring Hindus address gods. Compare, for instance, the highlighted references in these translations of Matthew 5:1-2:

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64. The *Inquiry* is written in, as Allen puts it, “the malleable, trans-regional language of earlier Hindi texts,” which was a form of classical Hindi of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries distinguishable from the modern standard Hindi (based on a form of Khaṛī Boli) that developed in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Allen, *The Ocean of Inquiry*, 12-13). [For a helpful study of the development of Hindi, see Tiwari, *Hindī Bhāṣā kā Udgam aur Vikās*.] The root verses of *Inquiry*, Allen reports, fall “within the range” of Brajbhāṣā or classical Hindi (Allen, *The Ocean of Inquiry*, 88), with its closeness to northern Indian dialects like Brajbhāṣā and Avadhī (Allen, *The Ocean of Inquiry*, 87) and lacking the Sanskritized vocabulary of modern standard Hindi. As Allen notes, Niścaldās’s decision to write in a vernacular quite lacking in Sanskrit signaled his position on issues of scriptural authority, claims about the uniqueness of Sanskrit (e.g., as the language of liberative knowledge), and relationships between language and community (Allen, *The Ocean of Inquiry*, 86).


66. Exemplified in Hindi hymns with lyrics like yiśu, yiśu! pyāre yiśu! tū hī merī āśā hai (Jesus, Jesus, you [the non-honorific tū] alone are my hope). Ārādhānā ke Gīt [Songs of Worship], Hymn #267.

67. “When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying” (NRSV).
Yīśu bhīḍko dekhke parbatpar caḍh gayā aur jab vah baiṭhā tab śiṣy us pās āye.

Aur vah apnā munīh kholke unheṁ upādeś dene lagā.

(1909 Hindi New Testament; with non-honorific references)68

Jansamūh ko dekhkar yīśu pahāḍ par caḍh gae. Jab vah baiṭh gae tab śiṣy unke samīp āe. Yīśu in śabdoṁ meṁ unheṁ upădeś dene lage.

(1988-89 Hindi New Testament; with honorific references)69

Or the differences in these highlighted translations of Luke 4:14-1670:

Yīśu ātmākī śaktise gālīlko fir gayā aur uskī kīrti āspāske sāre deśmeṁ fail gai.

Aur usne unkī sabhāomeṁ upădeś kiyā aur sabhne uskī baḍāi kiī. Tab vah nāsāratko āyā jahāṁ pālā gayā thā aur apnī rītipar biśrāmke din sabhāke gharmēṁ jāke paḍhneko khaḍā huā.

(1909 Hindi New Testament; with non-honorific references)71

Yīśu ātmā kī sāmarthy se bhar kar galīl pradeś laute aur unkā nām āspās ke sāre pradeś meṁ fail gayā. Vah sabhāgrhoṁ meṁ upādeś dete the aur sab log unkī praśansā karte the. Yīśu nāsārat nagar meṁ āe, jahāṁ unkā pālan-poṣaṇ huā thā. Vah apnī rīti ke anusār viśrām-divas par sabhāgrh meṁ gae. Vah
dharmāśāstr paḍhne ke lie uṭhe.

(1988-89 Hindi New Testament; with honorific references)72

70. “Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read” (NRSV).
71. Dharmāpustak kā Antbhāg. [or, The New Testament in Hindi], 175.
In the case of Matthew 5:1-2 and Luke 4:14-16 the shift from non-honorific to honorific language is conspicuous between the 1909 and 1988-89 versions. The earlier versions of the Hindi Bible use terms like (caḍh) gayā, baïṭhā, (dene) lagā, and khaḍā huā – “he climbed,” “sat,” “started giving,” and “stood up” respectively – in verbal forms reserved for references to actions by those younger to or less honored than the speaker or writer. They further use possessive pronouns like uskī – “his” – in forms that are similarly used to refer to a person who is less honored than the writer or the speaker. In the later versions of the Hindi Bible, however, these very same words take on honorific conjugations like (caḍh) gae, baïṭh gae, (dene) lage and uṭhe,73 along with the honorific personal possessive unkī in place of the earlier uskī.

But the link of a language like modern Hindi to its parent languages like Khari Boli and Sanskrit also matters, for the parent language can provide terms and metaphors necessary to communicate complex matters. This borrowing and adaptation is especially prevalent in cases where the parent language happens to also function as the source language (SL) from which ideas are being translated into the receiving language (RL). In the case of Christian history in India, English and Sanskrit have functioned as source languages for Hindi Christian literature and evidence of this heritage permeates the latter. Translations of the Bible, especially of the Gospels, into Hindi reflect this heritage and process.

The relatively young field of translation studies, given shape in J. S. Holmes’ The Name and Nature of Translation Studies in 1972,74 has moved from a view of language as an abstract system capable of study and use irrespective of context to an understanding of language in

73. The transition is in the concluding vowel, from gay-ā, baïṭh-ā, (dene) lag-ā, and khaḍ-ā hu-ā to ga-e, baïṭh ga-e, (dene) lag-e and uṭh-e.
relation to its context. Attention to context meant fidelity to clarity and recognition in the receiving language; what was being used to translate from the source language should not only bear conceptual recognition in the target language but must also be recognizable as something one would say in the target language. But such context-specificity raised its own problems. A translator was expected to be fluent in the source culture and was bound by the source culture even while trying to find an equivalent in the target culture, which required competence, if not fluency, in that culture as well.

But uncritical attention to context could further lead to its own pitfalls like cultural adaptation, in which the text gets nearly rewritten from the perspective of the target culture; or exoticism, where “grammatical and cultural features of the source text are constantly imported into the target text with minimal adaptation”; or cultural borrowing, or using loan words; and, communicative translation, where the translator forgoes a literal translation in favor of a communicative one, especially in cases where literal translations, say of clichés and idiomatic expressions, could lead to comical or nonsensical expressions. Attention to context, however, also allowed postcolonial thinkers to unveil the marks of violence borne by vernacular projects. In the way Columbus renamed the countries and native inhabitants he encountered, the British Raj in India, following Mughal precedents, renamed towns and cities, classified religions and castes, and elevated certain modes of expression (the written text) and languages (e.g., English) over other ones.

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The turn to context was accompanied by a turn to authorial intent, evident in the three phases which have shaped translations and vernaculars. In the first instance, formalism and Orientalist scholarship sought to present the target language in forms and idioms familiar to the source language. Critiquing the ideology at the time among German scholars, Rudolf Pannwitz wrote in *Die Krisis der europäischen Kultur* (1917): “Our translations, even the best, start out from a false principle they want to germanize Indic Greek English instead of indicizing, graecizing, anglicizing German. They are far more awed by their own linguistic habits than by the spirit of the foreign work.”

In the second instance, the gradual congruence of theories and methods in the mid-twentieth century gave rise to greater recognition of the role and task of a translator. Post-structuralism destabilized authorial intent and the text was no more taken to have fixed meaning diachronically or synchronically. For some, authorial intent and context did not matter as a controlling agent but functioned rather as an interpretive choice: it was necessary to be aware of the history, context, and purpose of the author but a text was interpreted at any given instance by an interpreter. It did not exist as an independent, speaking agent.

The turn to context and the interpretive reader raised another set of questions. Who was interpreting? Who was writing? Was writing an act of literary privilege? What about oral traditions, agency, and ideology in translations? The third movement in translation studies constituted a focus on the power relations among various participants in the process of

78. Pannwitz, quoted in Benjamin, “The Translator’s Task,” 163.
79. As my New Testament professor in Divinity School once demonstrated: he walked into our first class, placed a Bible on a podium in the middle of the room, and said, “Quiet, everyone. Let the Bible speak. What can you hear?” After many minutes of awkward silence, he made his point. The Bible does not “speak.” Interpreters speak the Bible; its readers “speak.”
translation. Postcolonialist thinkers like Krupat and Bhabha questioned the nature of translations. Literary scholars like Tony Stewart had already addressed purity-related charges of syncretism and diglossia in translation. The postcolonialists asked whether it was possible to truly transmit in translation. Oral literature as a category moved from an oxymoronic idea to acceptance; the transformation of the word that was being heard by the ear into ink marks on a paper read by the eye was itself a translation (Krupat), and one in which transmission loss was inevitable (Bhabha).  

Translation theories suggest various objectives behind the attempt to recreate a concept in a language different from the original, source language. The nature of the object of translation defines which word in the receiving language may be most appropriate, whether such a choice is possible, when to borrow and adapt from the source language, when to use a neologism, and when to explain the lack of an equivalent in the receiving language. In such cases, a “diglossia” may emerge; not a hybrid language that includes connected terms in both languages but a language with ‘new’ terms in the receiving one in the form of loan words like *ipso facto* and *Brahmin* or neologisms like that in the case-study below that seek conceptual recognition in particular ways to assert the limits of translations.  

80. In Homi Bhabha’s evocative image, translations function as the ‘migrant in-between,’ trying to bridge cultures while reminding its readers of the untranslatability of culture, questioning the full transmissible of subject matter. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 321.

81. Stewart prefers conceptual “equivalence” to describe the goal of the process of translation. But equivalence connotes too strong a sense of parity, as if the meaning and function of the concept in the source language is adequately represented in the translation in the receiving language. This is certainly the case for a large proportion of the texts of good translations. There remain, however, in Hindi Christian literature substantial instances where such representation is not possible. In such cases, conceptual recognition rather than conceptual equivalence better describes the state of affairs, where a person familiar with the concept in the source language could recognize its counterpart in the receiving language. For instance, *swargdūt* in the Hindi Bible is conceptually and categorically different from *devātā* in Sanskrit. *Devās* are considered divine beings that occupy a co-equal position with other gods above human beings and demons, and in many cases constitute divine representations of powerful, natural forces. Angels in Christian parlance, *swargdūts*, occupy a place in God’s creation different from those saved and are not considered divine representations of natural forces the way *devās* are. Despite their
Dehādhāraṇ in Hindi Christian Literature

One of the influential debates in Hindi-language Christian thought has revolved around the merits and shortcomings of using the term *avātār* to present the relationship between Jesus and God. How to translate ‘incarnation’? Can *avātār* capture what Christians are trying to say? Hindi-speaking Christians are not the only ones asking these questions. Hindu reformers have also explored them.

Early Hindu reformers found the idea of Jesus as an *avātār* appealing. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa (1836-86) and his disciple Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) considered Jesus to be an *avātār* of God. A deep, personal experience of God characterized an *avātār* and Ramakrishna thought Jesus to be such an *avātār*. His disciples, especially Vivekananda, ascribed the same quality to Ramakrishna. Of Jesus and Ramakrishna, Vivekananda wrote: “The Word has two manifestations, the general one of Nature, and the special one of the great Incarnations of God – Krishna, Buddha, Jesus and Ramakrishna. Christ the special manifestation of the Absolute is known and knowable. The Absolute cannot be known; we cannot know the Father, only the Son.”

Vivekananda does not address Jesus’s claim those who know him know the Father partly because Jesus declared himself to be one with the Father. There was no hidden God, knowable and to be known, but rather the knowable manifestation available in the *avātārs*.

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Christian uses of *avātār* also have a long history in India. Roberto de Nobili used the term cautiously in the seventeenth century, affirming that Christ is the true incarnation of God.\(^3\) *Avātār* generally meant descent or manifestation. Given the familiarity of the concept in Indian culture at large, Indian Christians used the terms *avātār* and incarnation interchangeably. Many Christian authors have argued that their tradition shared certain claims about *avātārs*: the embodiment of God in human form, a direct experience of God in this life, and personal devotion to an embodied deity.

Yet, as Amaladoss notes, Indian Christians also adapted the idea to include features particular to Christian claims: that Jesus did not come in power but rather as a suffering servant (according to the *Bhagāvad Gītā*, Krishna reveals his cosmic form, whereas Jesus in the New Testament refuses an entreaty to do so); God’s humanity in Jesus did not disappear after Jesus’s death but it endures in time and eternally; and, Jesus’s humanity leads all humanity to salvation. These features explained why Jesus was “a special incarnate avatar.”\(^4\)

Others have tried to bring Christ closer to other *avātārs*, especially to Krishna. For Ovey N. Mohammed (1993),\(^5\) the Christ of the New Testament can be compared to the Krishna of the *Gītā*: he is the “true God and true human” who saves graciously.\(^6\) Based on a lengthy analysis of soteriology in the *Gītā* and in the New Testament, Mohammed writes in unmistakable Christian idioms that “God takes the initiative in reconciling us to Godself by becoming incarnate in

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\(^3\) Thangaraj, *The Crucified Guru*, 75.  
\(^5\) Mohammed, a Jesuit, was Professor of Systematic Theology at Regis College, the Jesuit School of Theology at the University of Toronto. Mohammed has published on Ignatian spirituality and the Bhagāvad Gītā, Hinduism and spirituality, and on theology of religions and interfaith hermeneutics.  
\(^6\) Mohammed, “Jesus and Krishna,” 11.
Krishna and Jesus.” In similar vein, V. Chakkarai, a Vaishnavite convert to Christianity, has argued that *avātār* rather than *guru* is most suitable to translate the concept of incarnation as it expresses the intimate union between God and human as “no mere theophany but a permanent, mediating union.”

Sadhu Sundar Singh has also used *avātār* and incarnation as synonyms. Fr. Camille Bulcke, in his much used *English-Hindi* Dictionary (first published in 1968), translated ‘incarnate’ as *dehādhārī* or *śarīrādhārī* (one who takes on or holds or puts a body) and ‘incarnation’ as *dehādhāraṇ, avātaraṇ,* and *avātār.* More recently, after a careful survey of arguments on both sides and a credible assessment of *avātār* in Advaitā in Sanskrit, Steven Tsoukalas has argued for the “interchangeability” of *avātār* and incarnation, albeit with substantial caveats. As one Indian theologian has put it, “the term *avatar* is the closest Hindu equivalent to the Christian idea of incarnation.”

But another strand in Indian Christian theology questioned the interchangeability of *avātār* and incarnation, both in general and in the specific case of comparisons between Krishna and Christ. An 1801 account from the early days of the Baptist Missionary Society in Bengal reports that Hindus “often confound the names of Kreeshnoo and Crist, which they pronounce Creestoo.”

91. He compares chapter 4 of the *Gitā* (with Kṛṣṇā’s *avātār*) and commentaries on it by Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja with notions of incarnation in Orthodox Christianity to reach his conclusion.
92. Substantial enough that he proposes a neologism. Tsoukalas hopes to retain the familiarity of *avātār* and maintain the uniqueness of Christ in order to find common ground that “enhances evangelistic/interreligious relations” (Tsoukalas, *Kṛṣṇa and Christ,* 225). Yet each term falls short in the other's context, and to bridge the gap he proposes *iśvarāvatāraviśeṣaivapiṇḍamanyasya* (“a full human being [arising] from a unique specific/particular descent of the Almighty”) or *iśvarāvatāraviśeṣaivamanuṣyasatya* (“a real human being [arising] out of a unique specific/particular descent of the Almighty”). (Tsoukalas, *Kṛṣṇa and Christ,* 228.)
Alarmed by this trend, Joshua Marshman (1768-1837), a prominent member of the Serampore trio and a key collaborator with Carey on Bible translations, composed a 3-page poem in Bengali to correct this increasingly common error. The first page of the poem is presented here as a sample from the 1801 report:94

The DIFFERENCE:

Or, Kristnoo and Christ compared.

THE words of love, dear Hindoos, now attend:
Kristnoo and CHRIST as one, why apprehend?
Examine coolly, I'll propose the test,
Who ne'er examines justly ranks a beast.
In cool discussion he who God appears,
His followers be, dismissing all your fears.

To kill a tyrant, Kreeshnoo man became;
CHRIST took our nature sinners to redeem.
One country’s welfare, Kreeshnoo’s highest aim;
CHRIST [sic] as their Saviour may all nations claim.
Kreeshnoo could earthly good alone procure;
But CHRIST hath heavenly glory made secure.

His own enjoyment merely Kreeshnoo fought,
He ne’er for sinners felt one anxious thought;
Midst crowds of wanton nymphs, in sport and play,
And idle mirth, he spent the live-long day.
CHRIST to the blind gave fight, speech to the dumb,
And even rescued from the darksome tomb;
He his own pleasure ever did forego,
And spent his life t' abolish sinners’ woe.

Who thus in love and rich compassion shone,
Dear brethren judge, he must be God alone.

Conflating Krishna with Christ was a matter of deep concern, and care was taken in this early stage of Protestant mission to separate Christ from Krishna and present one as “God alone” against the other. Poems such as the one above signified gaps in translation: attempts to borrow

94. Yale Digital Library Collection, digcoll 184118, 318.
terms and concepts wholesale across contexts could lead to misinformation and confusion. The use of *avātār* resulted in a loss in transmission. Incorrect information was being communicated. Conflating Krishna with Christ (ignoring key differences between them), treating them as interchangeable saviors, and in doing so holding Jesus as one savior among many, undermined a core Christian claim: that only Jesus Christ could save. Similarly, Keshab Chandra Sen, who feared the rise of a Brahminical version of Christianity, vehemently opposed using *avātār* for incarnation, calling such use “the lie of Christian avatarism.”

Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, from the standpoint of an *advaitin* Christology, held there to be only one Incarnation, that of Christ, in whom the Supreme Brahman became incarnate.

In line with such thought, Din Dayal adds an important corrective in *Masīhī Dharm Vijñān kā Paricay* (“An Introduction to Christian Theology”), published in 2005. Resistance to *avātār* in a common narrative within Indian Christianity stems from a sense that the uniqueness of Christ has been compromised and Christian claims have been diluted through copying Hinduism. Dayal’s corrective is to make explicit the fact that socio-economic factors also affected the resistance to *avātār*: Christian converts from lower caste and Dalit backgrounds sought distance from mainstream Hindu theology. As a consequence, missionaries translating the Bible and the Good News into Hindi sought an identifiable Christian vocabulary separate from that of the Hindu elite.

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97. The official English name on the copyright page lists “An Introduction to the Indian Christian Theology.” That the copyright holder, H.T.L.C., felt it necessary to qualify ‘Christian Theology’ with ‘Indian,’ which is absent from the original Hindi title, suggests and fits H.T.L.C.’s habit of marking its publications as ‘Indian.’
Given the competing claims on the suitability of *avātār* as a synonym for incarnation, then, Hindi translators created a neologism. Unlike Indian Christian theologians who conflated Hindu and Christian ideas at the turn of the twentieth century, Hindi Bible translators consistently ignored *avātār* and chose *dehādhāraṇ* (*deh* “body” + *dhāraṇ* “to possess”) to translate ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο in John 1:14 (“the logos became flesh,” from the verb γίνοµαι (“to become”), which the NRSV translates as “the Word became flesh”).

*Dehādhāraṇ* has been translated as ‘embodied’ or ‘incarnation,’ but I would suggest that the best use of either translation is one that preserves the active nature of the act of embodiment (that Jesus Christ embodies) and focuses on the one who embodies. *Dehādhāraṇ* in this construction is specific to Christ (as the translators intended), points to his “taking birth” (and not a passive reference to his “being born”), and hints at his taking and having a real and physical body. A *dehadhārī* is one who is bodily present or possesses a body (*śarīrī*) and is a living creature (*prāṇī*).

Hindi Christian theologians of various generations have argued against *avātār* and in favor of *dehādhāraṇ* on grounds that the historical use of *avātār* does not communicate the

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99. The use of *dehādhāraṇ* can be traced to one of the earliest Hindi Bibles (from 1909). The case study in this chapter has focused on biblical translations and modern hymns, but a different project on which I am working – tracing the making of the Hindi Bible (for which I conducted research at the Angus Library at the University of Oxford) – will attempt to trace the use of *dehādhāraṇ* in Hindi Christian publications in general. Such a study is seeking to answer a related question: what is the relationship between Hindi Christian literature and biblical translations? For instance, did the use of *dehādhāraṇ* in Hindi Christian literature (in sermons, articles, reports, etc.) precede that in official biblical translation? Tracing the earliest use of *dehādhāraṇ* in Hindi Christian materials, however, is only tangentially relevant to the claim I have made in this project: namely, that in modern Hindi Christian literature (including in Hindi Bibles since 1909) the use of *dehādhāraṇ* is nearly exclusive. Another issue also needs further exploration: the way in which σὰρξ ἐγένετο becomes *dehādhāraṇ*. I expect to explore this transformation in my study of the making of the Hindi Bible.
100. As one popular Urdu-Hindi translation of “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” puts it, Jesus “wore Adam” (literally: “wore the clothes of Adam”; *pahnā ādam kā libās*) [*Ārādhānā ke Gīt*, Hymn #88].
102. Bahri, *Rājpāl Hindī Śabdăkoś*, 407. Dr. Bahri, a renowned scholar of Hindi, was one of the first recipients of the Subramanyam Bharti Award, given by the Central Hindi Directorate of the Ministry of Human Resource Development of the Government of India for outstanding contributions to Hindi literature.
Christian idea of incarnation. Dayal’s book and Richard Howell’s *Parivartan* (Conversion) are the latest Hindi Christian works to make this claim and Dayal’s book is an example of the preference for *dehādhāraṇ* in Hindi Christian theology that is also evident in the Hindi Bible and in Hindi Christian hymns, poems, and other literature. I will examine these works to show how Hindi theologians have used the *dehādhāraṇ-avātār* question to find a distinguishable Christian vocabulary in service of a recognizable Christian identity.

Dayal lists four objections to the use of *avātār* in Christian contexts. First, like Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya and Swami Abhishiktananda, he notes that Hindus speak of many *avātārs* while Christians hold that Christ is differentiated by a triple-mark: contra plurality, Christ is “Lord for ever, unique, and embodied” (“*khrist sadā ke lie advitīy dehādhārī prabhu hai*”). Second, the historicity of Hindu *avātārs* is not “important” to Hindu scholars and in some cases is contested; Christ, on the other hand, was a “historic man.” Third, there is a “huge difference” in the objective of Hindu *avātārs* and the *dehādhāraṇ* of Christ Jesus: *avātārs* come to destroy the evil and the wicked while Christ comes to save the sinners and those in need of redemption.

Finally, and here Dayal’s attention to the body of Jesus shapes his case, “Hindu avatar is Docetic” (“*Hindu avātār rūpābhās (Docetic) hai*”). Vishnu appears in human form on earth. Such Docetic claims were also made of Christ in early Christianity but (later orthodox) theologians – and here Dayal is drawing his argument mostly on Chalcedon's declaration of

103. Howell, *Parivartan*, 194-95. At the time of publication, Howell (Rev. Dr.) was President of the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI). Founded in 1951 as a national alliance of evangelical Christians, EFI trains missionaries to witness the good news, seeks to transform India, and advocates for the poor and marginalized. Its legal arm (the Christian Legal Association) advocates on behalf of the rights and freedom of Christian converts and institutions.


Christ’s dual nature – strongly opposed such an idea. Given these differences, though *avātār* can be found in some nineteenth- and twentieth-century Indian hymns, Hindi Christians by and large have not accepted the word. As Dayal rightly notes, every Hindi Bible of the Bible Society of India has used a form of *dehādhāran* to translate John 1:14.

The preference for *dehādhāran* and its grammatical forms is also evident in the near exclusive occurrence of the word in Hindi Christmas hymns. The primary Hindi hymnal, *Ārādhānā ke Gīt* (Songs of Worship), published in its most recent edition in 2009 by a joint committee of the Madhya Pradesh Christian Council and the Methodist Church in Southern Asia for use in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar, presents 47 songs for Advent and Christmas. In every case bar one where incarnation is referenced in these hymns – the anomaly is the chorus of hymn #110: *Le līnhā khrīst avātārā, manāo khuśī* (“Christ has become incarnate, Rejoice!”) – we find *deh dhāran* or *dehādhārī* or *dehādhār* (hymns #77, 86, 90, 92, 93, and 98).

Consider this Hindi translation of a favorite hymn among Lutheran churches: “O Come, All Ye Faithful.” The original text is attributed to John Francis Wade (1711-1786) and is translated in part (stanzas 1, 3-4) by Frederick Oakeley in 1814; *Ārādhānā ke Gīt* does not list its Hindi translator. Presented here are the English and Hindi translations of the chorus, stanza 1, and stanza 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Hindi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O come, all ye faithful,</td>
<td><em>ab āo viśvāsiyo</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>joyful and triumphant!</td>
<td><em>jay jay karte āo</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem;</td>
<td><em>ab āo hum caleṁ baṭṭaham ko</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come and behold him, born the king of angels;</td>
<td><em>carnī meṁ dekho mahimā kā rājā;</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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106. Tsoukalas points to Telugu hymns that use *avātār* (Tsoukalas, *Krṣṇa and Christ*, 225)
108. *Ārādhānā ke Gīt*, #86.
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ, the Lord

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory giv’n!
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing.

Other variations to express the incarnation of Christ elaborate on the theme: “wore the clothes of
man” (“ādmī kī sūrat meṁ huā pastāhāl”; #96), “God has become man” (“huā hai khudā insān”; #107), “who is born of/the son of Mary” (“jo mariyam kā jāyā hai”; #114), “left heaven, became human” (“choḍā āsmān, banā insān”; #118), and “God has come down to earth having become
human” (“utar āyā jahāṁ meṁ ab khudā insā ban ke”; #122).

It is further the case that, in support of Dayal’s argument, biblical verses that speak of Christ’s
descent to earth like John 3:13 have been translated using utrā to highlight the act of descent in
clear distinction from words for ‘appear’ or ‘seem’ (Gk. δοκέω), like darśan in John 21:14
(“This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples”), dikhāī in 1 Corinthians 15:5
(“and then he appeared to Cephas”), or pragaṭ in Hebrews 9:26 (“he has appeared once for all at
the end of the age”). Forms of utrā are also used in Genesis 28:12 (“and the angels of God were
ascending and descending”), Exodus 34:5 (“The Lord descended in the cloud”), Mark 1:10 (“the
Spirit descending like a dove on him”), John 1:51 (“the angels of God ascending and descending
upon the Son of Man”), and Ephesians 4:9 (“he had also descended into the lower part of the earth”).

Other Hindi Christian theologians have also mentioned lists similar to that of Dayal. Howell provides a list of eight objections. In addition to the four objections raised by Dayal – Christ is a unique incarnation, historic, a savior and not a destroyer, and fully human\(^\text{109}\) – Howell adds four more. (1) *Avātārs* are different from other human beings in degree only and not in type. This follows an earlier explanation that Hindus believe the world emanates from God's nature and is not of a different nature than God (cf. note 59). (2) *Avātārs* emerge from the supreme Atman (*viśv ātmā*) and return to it lacking an independent existence of their own. (3) Hindu *avātārs* share knowledge acquired from history while Christ gives heavenly knowledge.\(^\text{110}\) (4) *Avātārs*, including those cases where a *guru* claims to be liberated, promise and teach “realization of the self” (*svayaṁ ka anubhav*) but Christ calls humanity to a new birth, freedom, and fellowship with the living God.

\(^{109}\) On the bodily nature of Christ, Howell’s gloss is different than that of Dayal’s. Dayal claims Docetism in *avātār*; Howell reasons from within Hindu theology that a fully human *avātār* would get caught in the karmic cycle and will need liberation for itself. Since such *avātārs* do not need liberation but liberate others, they are not fully human. Howell’s and Dayal’s claims fall short of the complex arguments in the Gita that present Krishna as possessing a special body, made of material but above the vicissitudes of karma, attachment, and ignorance. To the extent that Krishna’s body is material yet possesses unique features – Krishna distinguishes his lower and higher material nature (*prakṛti*) in the Gita, and fueled by this distinction Steven Tsoukalas concludes that Krishna is “sinless” because his body lacks a “connection with *prakṛti* as it relates to *triguṇātmikā* [the material nature of ordinary humans],” but since “human beings’ material [lower] nature comes from the eternal [higher] *prakṛti* that is indwelled by Viṣṇu,” there is identification of Krishna with humanity (Tsoukalas, *Kṛṣṇa and Christ*, 165) – the Gita seems to be making a similar claim as Dayal and Howell make when they ascribe a special body to Christ and explain that he was fully human *yet* without sin (‘yet’ a reminder of the unique nature of Christ's body).

\(^{110}\) The argument seems to be that Hindu religious *gurus* and teachers, many of whom claim to be incarnations of one sort or another, pass on knowledge acquired from history, having learned from their earthly teachers (see, e.g., *Gita* 4:1-4). Christ, on the other hand, imparts heavenly knowledge not learned from the past but drawn from His relation with the Father.
Translations of the Bible in Hindi and Hindi books reveal a consistent pattern. Hindi Bibles of the Bible Society of India and commonly used hymnbooks in Hindi – like Ārādhānā ke Gīt/Songs of Worship, published by the Madhya Pradesh Christian Council in 1975 and expanded in 1999 and 2009 – have consistently used dehādhāraṇ to mark the birth of Christ. While the debate between dehādhāraṇ and avātār among Indian Christians writing in English seems yet unsettled, Hindi authors and churches have repeatedly chosen the former over the latter. What explains this choice? I offer that the preference for dehādhāraṇ among Hindi Christians is fueled by the desire to use a credible Christian vocabulary in service of a recognizable Christian identity amidst their (mostly) Hindu neighbors.

Howell, an evangelical church leader, is clearly aware that language choices matter. Words possess history and meaning in particular contexts and can be both beneficial and harmful. His detailed analysis of the appropriateness of dehādhāraṇ or avātār follows a longer discourse on the adequacy and weight of words. Howell, whose work with Protestant and Catholic partners has attuned him to the challenges faced by Christians across denominations and regions, has boldly critiqued churches and Christians who use harmful language against people of other faiths.

Poorly chosen and hurtful words harm God's mission. They can also confuse others and result in undesirable responses. So, Howell discourages Christian uses of words like ‘outsiders,’ ‘ignorant,’ and ‘idol worshippers’ to describe non-Christians. Such words “do not express love,” are “without merit” (ayogy), and “generate opposition” (virodhī bhāvānā utpann karne vāle). Not only can poor words harm relations, they can also become stumbling blocks for Christians.

He writes, “Those words that help us progress, come, let us attempt to take the words of our mission from the thought-world of Holy Scripture.” Howel is concerned with a recognizable Christian vocabulary that is biblically-sound and helps spread the Gospel in ways that can be distinguished from Hindu ideas.

**LINGUISTIC CHOICES IN ACTION**

For Hindi Christian authors, like many English writers before them, differentiating Christ from *avātārs* like Krishna and Rama was important. There were significant differences between the concepts of *avātār* and incarnation in ways that did not allow any easy interchangeability between them. Sham Rao (1972), writing on *guru* traditions in India, spoke for many Christians when he wrote, “We cannot…ignore the concepts of *avatara* and *guru* which have molded the Indian religious consciousness. But we cannot use *avatara* and incarnation as interchangeable terms, nor can Christ be understood merely as a *guru*. But the concepts are relevant starting points, and need to be studied in depth by Indian Christian thinkers.”

*Avātār*, as Sham Rao notes, was not the only way in which to transmit the concept of incarnation and a host of options were available. So, in addition to *guru*, Jesus was differently presented as an *antaryāmin*, *Cit* (of *Satchitānandā*), *Satyāgrahi* (M. K. Gandhi), Dancer, and, a *Parambhakta* (in complete harmony of thought and purpose with God) who inspires *bhakti* (A. J.

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113. Catholic Christians in India are also engaged in debates on the use of *avātār*. See, for example, D’Sa, “Christian Incarnation and Hindu Avatara”; and Sheth, “Hindu Avatara and Christian Incarnation.”


116. Clarke, *Dalits and Christianity*. 
Appasamy, among others. Hindi Christian authors did not find these proposals to translate the incarnation convincing and chose dehādhāran.

But, despite a preference for dehādhāran in Hindi Christian literature, a certain level of comfort with polytradition religious vocabulary is also evident in the Hindi Bible and other Hindi works. Polytradition words convey ideas and function in more than one religious tradition. Intentional linguistic semblance occurs when a religious group deploys a word or idea that is recognizably part of the vocabulary of another religious group. Take, for instance, the frequent use in the Hindi Bible of mandir (a temple, palace, abode, dwelling, or figuratively, the body), a term that Hindi Christians would readily recognize as one used also by Hindus to refer to temples. Mandir appears in 1 Sam. 3:3, Mt. 4:5, Mt. 12:6, Jn. 2:21, 1 Cor. 3:16, Eph. 2:21 (pavitr mandir for “holy temple”), and Rev. 21:22. Unlike the unsuitability of avātār as a substitute for dehadhāran, then, mandir functions along with other available options like bhavan (2 Ch. 2:12: “who will build a temple for the Lord”), and pavitr bhavan (Ps. 11:4: “The Lord is in his holy temple”).

Polytradition words are not limited to the Hindi Bible and also appear in Christian poems and hymns in Hindi. In her poems on the Gospel of Mark, for instance, Arya replaces Yīśu (Christ) with Prabhu (Lord or God) and Khudā (Urdu: God) with Parameśwar (Supreme Lord) to

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119. *Pavitrsthān* (1 Cor 3:16) or *pavitr bhavan* (Ps. 11:4) or *pavitr mandir* (Eph. 2:21) is sometimes deployed as an alternative to *mandir* to refer to the inmost part of a temple as different from the whole temple enclosure when the original Hebrew or Greek so demands, e.g., to translate ναός θεοῦ in 1 Cor. 3:16. See also Abbot-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon*, 300.
120. Which is also a title of Viṣṇu or Śiva; see, McGregor, *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*, 604.
present the Good News (śubh sandeaux) to readers of any religion or community.\textsuperscript{121} Arya explains, “I have tried to make this presentation universal and broad in such a way that a reader of any religion/community can read it.” God is not transcended or nirgun in Arya’s construction, neither does her work minimize its evangelical intent, yet her willingness to liberate God from Christian-specific references suggests comfort with a pan-religious vocabulary. Such comfort with pan-religious vocabulary is also conspicuous in the not uncommon appearance of polytradition words like darśan (#18), mandir (#s 22, 47, 66,193, 330, 406), bhakti/bhakt (#s 29, 374), māyā (#285), muktī/muktidātā (#s 44, 78, 193, 284), śifā (#184), dharm (#s 27, 224), īmān (#s 27, 213, 287), khidmat (#s 47, 377), and pāk (#s 73, 148, 185, 437) in Hindi-language Christian hymns.\textsuperscript{122}

Christian works in Hindi reveal creative range and theological mobility: while dehādhāraṇ emerged as a special and recognizable neologism, avātār has also found a place in Hindi-language Christian discourses. While Hindi hymns have sought recognizably Christian translations, they are also replete with pan-religious terms and ideas. Resistance to the explanatory power of avātār can be traced to its limited ability to express incarnation through Christian eyes and due to a robust sense of difference between the process described in incarnation and that described in avātār theology. Here, the translation choice serves to distinguish and mark-out ideas. In other instances, however, the use of polytradition words in Christian hymns and literature in Hindi serves to equate and mark-in ideas. Here, words do not serve one tradition in specific ways but function within and between multiple religious traditions. Amidst mobility, however, some of the religio-linguistic choices demonstrate a certain amount of stability.

\textsuperscript{121} Arya, \textit{Kavitā meṁ Śubh Sandeś}, xiv-xv: \textit{Maine is prastuti ko is tārike se sārvājanik aur vyāpak banne kā prayāś kiyā hai, tākī kisi bhī dharm/samudāy ke pāthak ise padh sake hain.}

\textsuperscript{122} Hymns from \textit{Ārādhānā ke Gīt}.
Dehādhāran, as shown above, is remarkably consistent across Hindi-language Christian religious literature and devotionals. Similarly, polytradition words like mandir and īmān find regular use across such texts and draw our attention to an evident comfort with adopting religious words from other faith traditions. A careful study, then, of religious language and translation choices by Hindi-speaking Christians demonstrates the complex and dynamic nature of Christian-Hindu relations in a context where markers of religious identity are functional and shared. It brings to light some of the many subtle and rich developments found in Protestant Christian literature in central and north India that seek to function across religiously diverse and idiomatically Hindi worlds.

This diversity also symbolizes the “excess” of transmission that spills over and is unresolved in translations. No one term in the receiving context fully connects the idea from the source context being communicated in the new context. Translation from the original Greek of the New Testament into Hindi constitutes a familiar yet particular form of translation that is different from the one that occupied Indian Christian writers in English who were trying to bridge the gap between Christian claims and Hindu and other Indian expressions.¹²³

Finally, the debate over avātār is a reminder that translations in the context of Hindi Christian materials are not merely about how to translate words but also about how to convey ideas when existing words will not do and translations bear limited weight. More importantly, the debate reveals a linguistic attempt by Christians in India to create a recognizably Christian religious identity. The next chapter examines this impulse in Hindi-language Christian literature,

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¹²³. Muslim and Buddhist thinkers have also adapted Christian claims for Indian audiences. Examining them in detail will significantly expand the scope of this work, where, given my focus on Hindi-language Christian literature in central India, greater attention is warranted on Hindu-Christian interactions.
exploring the formation both of faith and of social identity in the context of discipline and discipleship within Hindi Christianity.
Chapter Four

Discipleship and the Formation of Faith:

Hindi Christian Guidebooks
Discipleship and the Formation of Faith

Discipleship is a focal feature of Hindi Christian literature. It is a recurring theme in a wide range of media like poems, hymns, pamphlets, television, radio, and music, and is given special attention in two genres of Hindi Christian literature that are particularly dedicated to it: guidebooks for daily living and prescriptive theological works. Theological works will be studied in the next chapter. This chapter offers a close assessment of Hindi Christian guidebooks (gāiḍ or sandarśikā). But, taken together, chapters four and five complement each other and seek to sharpen the contours of Hindi Christian literature examined to this point.

In this chapter, I will first explain the context and rationale for the production of ethical guidebooks in modern India. To do this, I will draw on Bonhoeffer’s analysis of Christian ethics to highlight three foundational aspects of Hindi Christian guidebooks: the formation of Christian virtues is important; Christian virtues are formed in communal contexts; and, a virtuous Christian life serves a public purpose as a means to communicate Christ. I will also draw on the general landscape of (Hindu) religious advisories in Hindi-speaking India within which Hindi Christian advisories and guidebooks have developed. Through this analysis of both Hindu and Christian catalysts behind ethical texts, the chapter provides a brief history of the production of Hindi Christian guidebooks. I will then study four key theo-ethical Hindi Christian texts – two of which address the issue of gender in Hindi Christian texts – to highlight the ways in which the

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1. In this approach I seek both to highlight Hindi Christian writing by women scholars and to shed light on the ways in which gender is addressed in Hindi Christian texts. This attention to gender itself is important for three reasons. First, in Hindi Christian churches, while the clergy is predominantly male, women do a bulk of church-related work, like leading Sunday schools, bible studies, orphanages, and Christian education for youth and young adults. Second, while the contribution of women to Hindi Christian congregations is not a contested idea, the ways in which their contribution is imagined or expected are quite contested. As I show below, James and Paul have different views of the role of women in church and in church leadership. Finally, the secondary status accorded to
development of a Christian virtuous life is proposed as a cherished and necessary aspect of Christian witness in India’s multifaith context. Having identified the attention paid in Hindi Christian texts to virtuous living as a tool for public witness, I will conclude the chapter with a summary of the social goals proposed in the four Hindi Christian theo-ethical texts I examine.

India’s cultural landscape is infused with certain values that facilitate sustained ethical thinking. Bhakti beliefs and practices, as discussed in chapter one, permeate much of the religious landscape occupied by Hindi Christians. Commentaries on ‘fulfilling one’s dharma’ (a notion I unpack below) are integral features of daily newspapers in Hindi hinting at the demand for and expectation of such advisory materials. Proper living, or at the very least commentary on proper living, occupies much interest in the religious, public imagination. Hindi Christians have found themselves in this larger material landscape.

Hindi Christians, however, also possess a heritage of ethical advisories received from missions and missionaries who, quite understandably, wanted converts to the Christian faith to live and believe in certain credible and recognizable ways. Christian ethics was a function of Christian discipleship and the need to be good disciples of Christ – embedded in the didactic function of the good news – was as important as the need to have a good sense of Christian beliefs. The Christian debates on the rationale for special attention to ethico-advisory texts is complex but generally proposes two broad explanations for the necessity of Christian discipleship: on the one hand, a life of Christian discipleship is a response to faith; yet, on the other hand, Christian discipleship must not be understood as constitutive of salvation or, in other words, as a form of

Christian women in some guidebooks (like Paul’s studied below) invites scholars of Christianity in India to take note of the ways in which Christianity in India has or has not intervened in India’s patriarchal societies.
works righteousness. As I will show in the next chapter, a study of influential Hindi Christian
texts reveals a third explanation for the attention paid by Indian Christian authors to (the
indispensability of) Christian discipleship: the need to present a credible and recognizable
Christian witness in a multifaith public context. In this chapter, however, it is sufficient to note
that Hindi Christian guidebooks were not just a function of their broader religious environment
but also valuable in their role as tools that allowed Christian believers to live in Christian ways.

Hindi Christian guidebooks offer a rich resource to study the form of discipline, discipleship, and
ethical advice available to Hindi-speaking Christian communities. They also enable us to study
the relationship between religious identity and the social goals or functions of such identities. In
doing so, they shed light on the private and public dimensions of Hindi Christian witness in
modern India. In one way, these guidebooks represent repositories of advice crystallized and
aimed at particular issues. As such, in place of rather broad studies of general ethical insights,
these guidebooks help us examine the social impetus behind ethical insights in very specific
situations. The guidebooks explored in this chapter offer advice in situations where a Christian
witness meets a multi-religious context as a minority faith. In another way, a careful study of
selected guidebooks allows us to closely examine the shaping of ethical insights in light of both
local and national concerns. As I will show, for instance, when discussing the short-lived
television series Bāibal kī Kahāniyāṁ (“Stories of the Bible”), a concern for the public
performance of Hindi Christianity has been driven by the desire among Hindi-speaking
Christians to establish a recognizable and distinguishable religious identity. In yet another way,
Hindi Christian guidebooks offer a detailed look into the issues that have shaped and continue to
shape the ethical and advisory content of Hindi Christian literature. Some of the topics of advice
that emerge in guidebooks, then, include (in no particular order) Christian preaching, church leadership, community development, family affairs, interfaith relations, public presence, and social welfare.

Discipleship plays a particular role in the formation of faith. It supplies an orientation to the formation of (proper) faith and practice, and in the form of discipline provides a strategic framework to the many ways in which faith is created, strengthened, and communicated. To understand discipleship and the formation of faith, I have found Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s analysis of costly discipleship most useful. For Bonhoeffer, there can be no Christianity without discipleship. He writes (emphasis added):

Discipleship means adherence to Christ, and, because Christ is the object of that adherence, it must take the form of discipleship. An abstract Christology, a doctrinal system, a general religious knowledge on the subject of grace or on the forgiveness of sins, render discipleship superfluous, and in fact they positively exclude any idea of discipleship whatever, and are essentially inimical to the whole conception of following Christ. With an abstract idea it is possible to enter into a relation of formal knowledge, to become enthusiastic about it, and perhaps even to put it into practice; but it can never be followed in personal obedience. Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.

2. Talal Asad’s treatment of medieval monastic life in *Genealogies of Religion* (77-134) also provides insights into the relationship between discipleship and the formation of faith. His work highlights both the importance of developing virtues through repetitive acts and the role of community in developing virtues. It also draws our attention to the fact that public witness serves as a rationale for virtuous life (in addition to the usual rationale one finds for ethical living: as a response to being saved). Formation of faith, in Asad’s analysis of monastic life, was not merely an implementation by an individual in her speech and acts of emotions and feelings observed in and acquired from the religious milieu around her but also the development through guided and public practice of particular religious desires and actions. Virtuous desires shaped through the application of ritualized and structured behaviors established the conditions for the possibility of virtuous choices. As a source of ideas, Bonhoeffer’s work on Christian discipleship is quite similar to Asad’s with respect to the insights available to a scholar of Hindi Christian discipleship – like Asad, Bonhoeffer helps us explore the importance of developing virtues, the role of the community, and public witness as a rationale for ethics. Bonhoeffer, however, has the additional advantage of being studied by and written on by Hindi Christian authors like Benjamin Khan (studied in the next chapter). Given the direct link we can make between Bonhoeffer and the Hindi Christian sources studied here, and the way in which Bonhoeffer’s reflections on Christian ethics and discipleship have been adapted in Hindi Christian guidebooks, I have found Bonhoeffer more useful than Asad, even as we recognize that Asad’s reflections on medieval monasticism can also enhance our understanding of the communal and public nature of Christian ethics among Hindi Christians.

Hindi Christian guidebooks – and Hindi Christian works on theology and ethics, as I will show in the next chapter – echo Bonhoeffer in such a commitment to personal obedience and concrete discipleship, and as I will show below, make ethics an inseparable corollary of theology. We look to Christ as our guide and model. This turn to Christ is both essential (for a Christian) and a response (by a Christian). It is the recognition of a Christian’s dependence on Christ. Since Christ is the Mediator of her salvation, she cannot but turn to Christ.

As a result of the work accomplished by Christ as Mediator – between God and human – a Christian faces a call to witness in relation with others and in public ways. A Christian is called first to a relationship with Christ and then to relationships with those around her. Written originally in 1937 – when the Führer Principle was ascendant, Nationalist Socialism had gained power and Adolf Hitler was appointed Reich Chancellor (1933), Nazi intimidation was gathering force, German Christians were aligning themselves with Nazi philosophy, church opposition to the “Reich church” was loudly announced in the Barmen Declaration (1934), and Bonhoeffer had become a leader of the confessing church – The Cost of Discipleship sought to re-assert the place of Christ as the guide and basis for human relationships over those formed on the basis of nation, creed, or family. In so doing, Bonhoeffer argued that only Christ, the Mediator between all relationships, called us to discipleship and loyalty as the true Leader.

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4. Hindi Christian literature in general contains many points of contact with the work of Bonhoeffer – such as in Khan’s work on ethics, Khristīy Nītiśāstr (1981), and on twentieth-century theologians, Bīsāvīṁ Šatābdī ke Pramukh Dharmāvijñānī (1990), both of which are discussed later in the next chapter.


6. The original 1937 German was titled simply Nachfolge (or, “discipleship”), but the first English translation in 1948 was titled The Cost of Discipleship.

A Christian is also called to be a disciple not in isolation but as part of a community. The relations that bind humans – relations within families, between an individual and the nation, or between members of a congregation – are borne out of a foundational relationship with Christ. As a community, disciples are called to serve and witness and to bear the fruits of the Spirit in their discipleship.\(^8\) In *The Cost of Discipleship*, it seems to me, community itself starts to take the form of an essential aspect of living in Christ. Christ mediated not only between God and a disciple but created a fellowship of disciples. As Bonhoeffer puts it,

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But the same Mediator who makes us individuals is also the founder of a new fellowship. He stands in the centre between my neighbour and myself. He divides, but he also unites. Thus although the direct way to our neighbour is barred, we now find the new and only real way to him – the way which passes through the Mediator.\(^9\)
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Christ the Mediator connects one human to another and as such one’s (direct) relationship with Christ precedes all other (indirect) ties. Consequently, individual responsibility to discipleship precedes all other loyalties. Such a theology demonstrably served as a repudiation of, as Bonhoeffer saw it, the “illusion” of our “direct relation” with the world, an illusion that had led many Christians in Germany to align themselves directly with a god and leader other than Christ.

Further, where discipleship to Christ is essential in a Christian life, Bonhoeffer and Hindi Christian guidebooks agree that such a call is also one to be a publicly visible community of disciples. “The call of Jesus makes the disciple community not only the salt but also the light of the world…. The followers are a visible community….\(^{10}\) A disciple is called to be visible because her good works are signposts to God. “Jesus does not say that men will see God; they will see the good works and glorify God for them. The cross and the works of the cross, the

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poverty and renunciation of the blessed in the beatitudes, these are the things which will become visible.”

Finally, in the way in which Hindi Christian guidebooks affirm the public and communicative functions of Christian ethics, Bonhoeffer’s theology of the visible affirms the importance for Christian ideas to be concretely perceptible. As we will see in the case of Hindi Christian theological works, the public, communicative, and concrete nature of proper Christian discipleship is but a reflection of the life and work of God in Christ in human history. “The Body of Christ takes up space on earth. That is a consequence of the Incarnation.” A Christian witnesses in particular contexts because Christ has called her to witness concretely in the world. She has the choice to hide her light under a bushel or to let her light shine, but if called by Christ and when responding to Christ her choice is clear: she is to be the light of the world.

So, how is discipleship communicated in the particular context of Hindi Christianity? Hymns circulate instructions on orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Collections of sermons explain what Jesus did and what he asks us to do. Short and long stories concretize ethics in fictional accounts that

13. Crucial differences remain between Bonhoeffer’s notion of discipleship and that found in Hindi Christian guidebooks. As an instance, *The Cost of Discipleship* distinguishes between visible and invisible aspects of discipleship. While a Christian is called to serve publicly, Bonhoeffer asserts that such service must be in “separation from the world, [in] our transcendence of its standards, and [in] our extraordinariness.” (Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 155) Christian righteousness, the source of (visible) Christian public service, should be hidden from (or, invisible to) ourselves. (Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 158) “Our task is simply to keep on following, looking only to our Leader who goes on before, taking no notice of ourselves or of what we are doing. We must be unaware of our own righteousness, and see it only in so far as we look unto Jesus….Thus we hide the visible from ourselves in obedience to the word of Jesus.” (Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 158) Such a “separation” is not meant as a call to withdraw from, renounce, or reject the world, nor is it a call to create judgmental communities of pious living. It is, rather, recognition of an “extraordinary” way of living and to beware the temptation to seek a Christian social order. We pray for the coming of the Kingdom of God against all earthly kingdoms. Hindi Christian literature, however, accords disciples greater responsibility than *The Cost of Discipleship* does in transforming social orders.
credibly represent real-life celebrations and challenges. All these forms of guides play a role in the formation of faith among Hindi-speaking Christians. Their messages, however, are most condensed in the many guidebooks for Hindi Christian life that are readily available. These guidebooks address the lay and the women, men, children, pastors, bishops, and people of other faiths. They present issue-specific and audience-related advice and instructions. They offer a helpful window into the multiple rationales for ethical instructions and shed substantial light on the audiences of Hindi-language Christian literature: Christian communities (intra-community audiences) and society at large (extra-community stakeholders). I now turn to concrete examples.

**HINDI CHRISTIAN GUIDEBOOKS: A BRIEF HISTORY**

Hindi Christian guidebooks include both original works and translations of ethical works by missionaries. A Hindi translation of Williams Barclay’s *Through the Year* devotional readings for every day was published in 2010: *Viliyam Bārkle ke Sāth Dainik Masīhī Ācaraṇ* (“Daily Christian Conduct” with William Barclay”). The original daily readings were published in ‘Orbiter Visa’ and ‘Seen in Passing’ in *British Weekly* during the editorship of Dennis Duncan from 1952-1970.15 C. W. David, former editor of the Hindi Theological Literature Committee,

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14. Ācaraṇ, in common Hindi use, refers to conduct or behavior. McGregor suggests the following options to translate ācaraṇ: conduct, behavior, custom, rule or norm of conduct, to behave, to act, to make a practice of, of good or virtuous conduct. (McGregor, *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*, 81). As a translation, “character” is closer to the original English. “Behavior” or “norm of conduct,” however, better captures the rationale behind the Hindi translations of Neill’s work: character is built over time; it is not just a conceptual notion, neither does it spring forth *ex nihilo*; character – both good and bad – is built over time by a collection of practices or norms of conduct that one develops through repetitive acts. The difference between the idea of character and the activity of building character is important to recognize in order to grasp the popularity of Neill’s work among Hindi Christians. It is also helpful to note that Hindi has a perfectly workable alternative to ācaraṇ that in common Hindi usage is more closely associated with the English word “character,” i.e. the Hindi word caritr, which McGregor translates as character, nature, and disposition of mind – three descriptions not associated with ācaraṇ (McGregor, *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*, 306). As a term, however, caritr lacks the action-based texture of ācaraṇ, which may be one reason why Hindi translators preferred the latter over the former to translate “character.”

translated the originals. Barclay was also a prolific writer and influential preacher. Barclay’s devotionals were popular among Hindi pastors who liked the devotionals for their ability to express the great truths of the Bible in simple and easily understood ways. As Anand noted in his preface to David’s translation, “Dr. William Barclay is among those few biblical scholars who have brought the great truths of the Bible to general readers of the world in simple words.”


While not a guidebook by design, one of the first Hindi texts to gain popularity, *Masīhiyoṇ kā Parameśvar*, combined doctrinal commentary with ethical insights and instructions on Christian discipleship. A Hindi translation by C. W. David of *The Christian’s God* by Neill (the original English and its Hindi translation were both published in 1954), *Masīhiyoṇ kā Parameśvar* gained so much popularity that it saw two reprints in its first year and was re-issued in a new edition.

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17. Sinha’s translation, like David’s, hews closely to Neill’s original. For instance, where Neill writes (*The Christian Character*, 15), “[w]e do not grow into likeness to Christ by obeying a number of rules. What we are concerned with is the formation of a character. A character is formed by many hundreds, many thousands, of decisions,” Sinha writes (*Masīhī Ācaraṇ*, 8), “Hum nānā prakār ke niyamoṁ kā pālan karne se masīh kī samāntā men nahiṁ badh sakte haiṁ. Hum jis lasky kī cintā men hain vah hai cartr yā ācaraṇ kā nirmāṇ. Ācaraṇ kā nirmāṇ saiḥdoṁ balki sahastrōṁ nirnāyoiṁ se bantā hai.” (or, “We cannot grow in the likeness of Christ by following a number of rules. The goal that concerns us is the construction of conduct or character. Character is formed by hundreds, nay thousands, of decisions.”)
each year thereafter. The immense popularity of *Masīhiyoṇ kā Parameśvar* inspired other Hindi-loving missionaries in the region to band together and support the work of the North Indian Theological College and the Hindi Theological Literature Committee in Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh).

The popularity of such works, however, needs to be understood in the wider context of Hindi Christian readership, which itself has evolved since the establishment of the H.T.L.C. The major groups of those who have access to and are interested in Hindi Christian texts have not changed much: seminarians, preachers, Christian teachers, lay leaders, families, Hindi Christian scholars, clergy, and Hindi Christian authors (e.g., poets, hymnists, and evangelists). The proliferation of audio and, in the past few decades, video materials have further ensured the general availability of religious materials for Hindi-speaking Christians and congregations. While improvements in technology, cost, and distribution have helped expand the audience for Hindi Christian materials, a more dramatic change is evident in the general support that is now available to the production and distribution of Hindi Christian materials. This is evident in the case of both print and, as mentioned above, audio-video media.

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18. Anand’s Preface in Sinha, *Masīhī Ācaraṇ*: “[H]aving commissioned a Hindi translation by Dr. C. W. David, who was the Chair, Hindi Department, Indore Christian College, of the English book *The Christian’s God*, which was written and edited by the world famous missionary Bishop Stephen Neill, the founder of H.T.L.C. and the famous Indore missionary and Hindi-lover Dr. R. S. Clark published *Masīhiyoṇ kā Parameśvar* in 1954. This book became so popular that in no time it was reprinted twice within the year. From there on it was published in a new edition every year.”


20. See page 65, note 35 above.
Consider, for instance, changes in attitudes toward the work of the Hindi Theological Literature Committee. Fifteen years after the production of Hindi Christian literature had finally acquired a national agency in the creation of the H.T.L.C., C. W. David, its editor at the time, bemoaned the relative paucity and neglect of Hindi readers. “It is the misfortune of Hindi Christian literature that it has very few readers,” he wrote. “This literature has received from neither the church nor the Indian community any praise or special encouragement.” He appealed to his audience: “Hindi speakers are requested to awaken and, by reading good books, to remove their shame and be enlightened.”

Data to study changes in Hindi Christian readership are hard to identify, given the lack of historical records and contemporary surveys of Hindi Christian readers. This challenge is further complicated by the modern proliferation of independent or non-mainline-church-aligned publishing houses and presses. Conversations with Hindi Christian authors and attempts at finding Hindi Christian literature in modern central and north India, however, reveal a large pool of available Hindi Christian literature – and a large pool of readers, in light of the low cost and availability of Hindi Christian materials, tied in part to the evangelistic work of Hindi Christian churches and organizations. As H.T.L.C.’s 2010 catalogue attests, even as selective a bibliography of Hindi Christian literature as the 2010 catalogue reveals a doubling of available publications since the last comprehensive catalogue in 1917. David was lamenting a paucity of readers rather than a lack of books, but it is reasonable to surmise that the popularity and

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21. David’s Foreword in Sinha, Masīhī Ācaraṇ, ii (kh): Hindī masīhī sāhity kā durbhāgy hai ki uske pāṭhak bahut kam hai. Is sāhity ko na to kalīsīyā kī or se na bhārītīy samājī kī or se koī prāsansā ya visē prosāhān prāpt hai. Hindī bhāsīyoṁ se āgrah hai ki ve jāgeṁ aur acchī pustakoṁ ko padhne se apnī badnāmī ko dūr kareṁ aur prabuddh hoṁ.
production of Hindi Christian materials were not unrelated. A change in H.T.L.C.’s own outlook on institutional support to Hindi Christian literature demonstrates this trend.

Where David in 1970 agonized over the unpopularity of Hindi Christian literature, his successor Anand could be bullish in 2008 on the future of Hindi Christian publications. From its establishment till 2008, Anand writes, “H.T.L.C. has published nearly 150 small and big books. [And] by the grace of God H.T.L.C. wants to increase this number to 200 in the next two to three years.” Similarly, where David bemoaned the lack of institutional support in 1970, by 2008 Anand would claim widespread support for Hindi Christian literature and express optimism in its future:

[T]he Principals of theological colleges, church bishops, pastors, publication houses, distributors of our books, boards, and missionary organizations from the Hindi regions are giving us their full support. We are confident and hope that their love toward us will continue in the future.22

A change is certainly evident in the proliferation of Hindi Christian literature and materials now available through commercial gospel songs and movies, books and periodicals, podcasts, radio programs, internet streams, and 24/7 cable channels like Shubhsandesh Television (Hindi). The parent channel, Shubhsandesh (http://www.shubhsandeshtv.com/index.php; established 2007) offers programs in a range of languages, including Telugu, Tamil, and Oriya. The emergence of Hindi Christian guidebooks, then, coincided with an increase in the production and popularity of Hindi Christian literature, which itself drew much of its vitality from the desires of a growing Indian church to develop its own leaders, seminaries, theological education, resources, and public presence.

While these intra-communal forces have catalyzed the need for Christian instruction, larger social realities also help explain these resources for the formation of proper faith and acts. Key among these is the fact that religious lives in India are almost always disciplined and communally molded. As Anand’s works on interfaith relations have repeatedly reminded Hindi Christians, the lives of their religious neighbors are rich sites of wisdom that are conspicuously and immediately available. These neighboring theologies and practices should inspire and contribute to Christian theology and practices.

Consider, for instance, the religious advice column that has appeared since 1964 in *The Hindu*, which was India’s third most-read national English daily in 2014. The columns appear under helpful headings (italicized below) and present operational wisdom from the scriptures, traditions, and teachers. The following advice, for example, has appeared in *The Hindu*:

From womb to tomb of a person, about 40 religious rites have been prescribed (Samskaras) for the prosperity, happiness and sound health of a human being. (June 18, 1976)

Some of the commands in the text of the Lord are he who acts thoughtlessly or with a bad intention, invites misery; do not give up the path of righteousness out of greed or selfishness; do not utter words which may hurt others; never keep the company of those, who, under the pretext of devotion and preceptorship, indulge in hypocrisy and immoral activities; do the vocation befitting your station in life; avoid dealing with the wicked, those who deceive and the fraudulent, always see the good in others and not their faults; respect saints and study scriptural texts with reverence; to undo sins committed, by mistake, adopt expiatory measure as per the scriptural directives. Supplement devotion with righteous conduct and never give up faith in the Lord out of fear of slander by the unscrupulous and the ignorant. (January 5, 1990)

The Ramayana pervades our cultural life; every character has been presented to the reader in such a way that he or she can mould his or her future in a proper manner. (May 17, 1991)

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23. According to the 2014 Indian Readership Survey (IRS) conducted by the Media Research Users Council. [http://mruc.net/sites/default/files/IRS%202020%20Topline%20Findings.pdf](http://mruc.net/sites/default/files/IRS%202020%20Topline%20Findings.pdf); accessed 03/30/2015. *The Hindu* was launched as a daily in 1889 and founded as a weekly in 1878.


To avoid getting involved in worldly activities and refrain from indulging in prohibited acts, those who rely on scriptural authority have been asked to abide by the Law of Virtue…. When any clarification is necessary people can seek their guidance or from those who are well versed in them. (April 16, 1996)\textsuperscript{27}

God has provided mankind with numerous methods to realise the goal of life, to ensure a smooth journey here and enjoy peace of mind. The prescribed daily religious exercises are easy to be adopted and can be carried out without much effort. Taking bath early, performing certain minimal acts, visiting temples and paying obeisance to the Almighty and preceptors are not difficult. Observance of austerities is also not rigid. (October 19, 1996)\textsuperscript{28}

Then there are passages on performing duties, fulfilling one’s \textit{dharma}, meeting responsibilities, and following guidelines:

God has prescribed a Constitution for mankind and if its laws are violated, naturally He will be unhappy. … [E]very man, to the extent possible and with sincerity, should follow the injunctions contained in the Sastras. He should abide by the Law of Dharma, undertake to carry out the specific duties enjoined upon him and refrain from doing prohibited acts. (January 20, 1982)\textsuperscript{29}

Among the many forms of spiritual duties is the ceremony to appease the chief of the celestials (Indra), to ensure that Nature lavishes her bounty on humanity. Service to God and other deities associated with Him, in any form, is deemed as service to society…. [further] prayers and observances of austerities like “Sankranti” festivals are needed. (January 16, 1991)\textsuperscript{30}

The duties assigned in the scriptures should be carried out by men and women…. Freed from passion, anger and fear, absorbed in God, taking refuge in Him, purified by spiritual knowledge, they seek His grace. (November 25, 1992)\textsuperscript{31}

Only the observance of the guidelines contained in the scriptures would promote discipline. To know what these are, the Epics and Puranas are being expounded in temples and other places, so that all would know their significance. Listening to them also indicated besides people’s rights, their responsibilities too. Spiritual education should hence be imparted at various levels. (November 20, 1993)\textsuperscript{32}

To fulfill one’s \textit{dharma} is to act according to the “duties [one is] assigned in scriptures.”

Scriptures speak of many duties, which the advice columns conveniently summarize and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{27} \textit{The Hindu Speaks}, 42.
\item \textsuperscript{28} \textit{The Hindu Speaks}, 13.
\item \textsuperscript{29} \textit{The Hindu Speaks}, 24-25.
\item \textsuperscript{30} \textit{The Hindu Speaks}, 249.
\item \textsuperscript{31} \textit{The Hindu Speaks}, 242-25.
\item \textsuperscript{32} \textit{The Hindu Speaks}, 40.
\end{itemize}
simplify: for instance, do not act with bad intentions, mind your words, seek God, and perform the appropriate rites. In addition to these general instructions, however, instructions on fulfilling one’s duty in specific contexts are also available through a variety of sources like teachers of scriptures, your local temple priest, holy women and men, and religious literature. In its highest form, to act according to one’s duty or dharma is to look beyond how those actions may meet one’s desires and interests. The actions of characters in the Ramayana and Mahabharata and Gita – three of the most widely-used Hindu scriptures – are paradigmatic of this perspective. Rama, for instance, gives up his birth-right as the first-born to rule and goes into exile to keep a promise made by his father to his mother. In the Gita, Arjun follows Krishna’s instructions and battles his cousins so as to fulfill his duty as a warrior. India’s public sphere does not lack in religious instructions and exhortations to fulfill one’s duty to one’s family and community. Hindi-language dailies popular in central and north India have also regularly published religious advice columns. Dainik Jāgran, for instance, publishes the Adhyātm (“spirituality”) column every day. Bhopal-based Dainik Bhāsker, one of the most popular newspapers among Hindi readers, publishes religious advice under a frequent column called Jīvan Mantr (“life advice” or spiritual advice). While much of such media focuses on astrology, pilgrimages, and rituals, their continued presence, influence, and demand reflects a broad cultural investment in practical advice for religious living.

**GUIDEBOOKS AND THEIR CONTENT**

The texts selected for analysis in this chapter represent instructions directed at different (though not exclusive) audiences within Hindi Christianity. *Masīhī Ācaraṇ* (orig. 1955, in English, by


The content of the selected guidebooks further serve to provide valuable insights into their social goals. *Samprēšan tathā Mukti kā Šubh Sandeś* by Anand and *Saṃvād: Kyoṁ aur Kaise, Masīhī Driṣṭikoṁ Se* (“Dialogue: Why and How, from a Christian Perspective”; orig. Hindi) by Benjamin Khan – both published a few months apart in 1994 – provide codes of conduct toward
While this selection of texts is by no means an exhaustive representation of the variety of Hindi Christian guidebooks available today, it substantially captures the form, content, and purpose of Hindi Christian guidebooks. This selection also sheds light on the diverse audiences for such guidebooks: lay men and women, church leaders, Christian teachers, evangelists, and pastors and bishops. What these books have in common is a dual purpose: to provide tools for the formation of Christian beliefs and practices, and to present Christian ideas within society-at-large with an eye toward public witness. They are communicative and formative in intent, symbolic and instrumental in content, and personal and communal in scope. These books are characterized by a combination of practical insights and theological reflections in service of readily applicable best practices.

Most guidebooks assume a basic knowledge on the part of their readers regarding the foundational elements of a Christian life. Lall provides a helpful summary in his response to the first question a Christian must (according to Lall) ask oneself:

Question 1 – What must I do to be a believer of Jesus Christ?
Answer – (1) To be free from your sins you must believe that Christ Jesus bore your sins (Isa. 53:6; 1 Pet. 2:24; Gal. 3:13. Read verses and replace “our” with your name). (2) Believe that Christ lives and can help the worst of the worst. Christ not only liberates from the punishment of sins, but also from the nature of sin (Heb. 7:25; Jude 1:24; 1 Pet.
(3) Believe that Christ is your Lord, King, and Savior. Follow his commands, submit your life to him (Acts 10:36; Rom. 10:9). (4) Believing what is written above, accept Christ in your heart (read Jn. 1:12; Acts 10:43; Jn. 3:16).... (5) Accept Christ before one and all. The more quickly and bravely you publicly accept Christ, the more your faith will strengthen (Matt. 10:32-33). (6) Commit to salvation and forgiveness. Read these verses again and again: Jn. 5:24; 3:16; 10:28. (7) Start living a Christian life. Express your faith through baptism. Begin your day by reading the word of God and by Christian prayer. Seek occasions to serve in the name of Jesus Christ. To walk in the company of a congregation – start joining in the work of the church. Give generously to the work of God.

A public witness is especially necessary for a Christian, whether in the form of speeches, preaching, or practice:

It is compulsory for every Christian to give witness, for a believer who has accepted Christ Jesus as his personal savior. He may not be able to give a big discourse, [or] he may hesitate to speak in a big assembly, but he will not be afraid to give his personal testimony before individual people. Sometimes this can lead to great success. This is what is special about personal evangelism.

A Christian life is one of words and actions. A Christian’s behavior matters. In opposition to attempts at Christian communication that seek to belittle, dismiss, or denounce other faiths, Indian Christian leaders like Lall and Richard Howell insist that denigrating other faiths should not be part of preaching the good news. Just as Howell speaks to the benefits of using respectful

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33. Lall, Susamācār-Pracār Darśan, 95-96: Praśn 1 – Prabhu yīśu kā viśvāsī hone ke liye mujhe kyā karnā āvaśyak hai?


34. Lall, Susamācār-Pracār Darśan, 62: Sākṣī denā prateyk viśvāsī ke lie anivāry hai, jis viśvāsī ne prabhu yīśu ko apnā nijī muktidātā grahaṁ kar liyā hai. Cāhe vah bade vyākhān na de sākehā, cāhe bādi sabhā mein kucch bolne se hīckīcāegā prāantu nijī rūp se ek-ek jan ke āge apnī sākṣī dene se na ḍaregā. Kabhī-kabhī ismēṁ adhīk safāltā bhī miti hai. Vyaktīt prācār kē viśeśātā yahī hai.
and non-derogatory language and claims when speaking with people of other faiths, Lall insists that evangelism should not destroy or refute a religion or belief:

It should be especially remembered in evangelism that a person’s religion or belief should not be refuted. It is easy to refute and it is possible that we easily defeat another in debate. But this will be of no benefit. A brother said to me, ‘a Christian evangelist roundly defeated a believer in the sanātan dharm in a debate and from that point I became opposed to the Christian faith.’ It is not our job to denigrate anyone. It is our job to use our witness to help a person meet Christ so that Christ may help her in her state.35

For Lall, good evangelism occurs in the space created by relationships and friendships where the interlocutors can trust and hear each other with respect and patience. Lall writes (emphasis original):

When a Christian explains the truth of the good news to another person in a one-on-one conversation, and presents her life experiences to the other person with trust, then the listening friend understands the good news and believes [it]. If any questions arise, they can address them cordially. Reading and explaining verses from the Bible starts affecting the listener’s heart. In the end the listener accepts Jesus as her savior. This is personal evangelism. Personal evangelism is to meet people one-on-one. Christ has used the parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15:1-7 to explain that the shepherd puts in much effort to search for one sheep, and finds it. Similarly, one who engages in personal evangelism spares no pain and effort in helping one person meet God.

Understand the benefit of personal evangelism also in this. Many people are indeed affected by preaching in the market or in the crowd but [they] ask the preacher many questions of meaning to showcase their wisdom, ability, or religiosity, to expose the preacher as a fool or as a preacher of a false faith. Indeed, many people will buy books and tear them and throw them. But I have seen that when you meet those same people separately, talk to them, their attitude changes.36

35. Lall, Susamācār-Pracār Darśan, 41: Susamācār pracār mein is bāt par viśeṣ dhyān rahe ki kisi ke dharm aur viśvās kā koī khanḍan na hove. Khanḍan karnā āsān hai aur ho saktā hai ki baďī āsānī se ham bahas mein dūsre ko harā dém. Parantu isāse koī lábh na hogā. Mujhe ek bhāī ne kahā, ‘ek khristī pracārak ne ek sanātanī ko bahas mein burī tarah harāyā aur us samay se main khrisīṭy dharm kā virodhī ho gayā.’ Hamārā kām kisi kā khanḍan karnā nahīṁ hai. Hamārā kām yah hai ki aapī sākṣī se pratbhum se kisi vyaktī ko milāeṁ ki uśī daśā mein pratbhum yīśu uskī sahāyātā kar sake.

Lall’s preferred outcomes from such encounters, however, differ from some of the other outcomes championed by Hindi Christian authors. For John H. Anand, as an instance, interfaith contacts should lead to a comparative reorientation of Christian theology.

The purpose of this study [on interfaith relations] is not to present information on people of other faiths. On the contrary, its purpose is to increase our understanding about our neighbors as members of active living faiths. Their doctrines and speech-acts should be integral parts of Christian theological reflections on the world and society. In other words, this study is a call to Christians to make the religious beliefs of their neighbors a part of Christian theological understandings and reflections. Till now Christian thought has not taken this seriously. But when the beliefs of our neighbors tell us about the ways in which we believe and understand our doctrines, it becomes essential that we accept the challenge to imagine our beliefs in new ways or dimensions. In doing so, we will be able to learn new things about our neighbors in new ways and will be able to live with them in a more intimate or closer society. This is most needed in our country.  

As he asks, since Christianity is not the only religion with a missionary impulse, how should Christian evangelists react to the missionary needs of other faiths?

Followers of many world religions believe that they have been commanded to give witness of their faith. Preaching faith is considered a responsibility in Islam, because the message of Islam is considered to be universal. Teachings of Buddhism also insist on this. The Buddhist path is considered to be salvific for all. But Buddhist missions are aware that they do so with deep love and a concern for humans and with respect for the religious beliefs of others…. [Hindus also] declare that the message of the sages of India should immediately reach the world, because without it “the world will be destroyed.”… As Christians we have many times thought of ourselves as givers of a message and others as receivers. We have thought of witness as a monologue. So how should we react to the...
Christianity’s minority status in India poses particular challenges and has elicited specific responses in Hindi Christian guidebooks. Attempts to narrate India as a Hindu nation have portrayed Christianity as anti-cultural or, as Lall puts it, as ‘culture-destructive’ or ‘culture-hostile.’ As a result, state agencies and religious groups have taken upon themselves the task to restrict and reverse Christian activities (the post-Modi uptick in ghar wāpsi, or “homecoming,” campaigns a recent symptom of this underlying cause). Lall writes:

In the last fifty years many nations have gained freedom from imperial powers. They are independent now. Gaining independence is a good thing. But independence has led to a sharp increase in nationalistic feelings which has in turn led to attempts in nations to promote culture, etc. The Christian faith is called destructive of culture. As a result, foreign preachers who used to come have been banned by saying that they need not come. Local churches have neither the numbers nor the resources to maintain their work, let alone expand it. Various types of government pressures have forced weak believers to leave congregations and return to their old faiths.39

Under assault, then, Hindi Christian authors like Anand and Lall have argued that the Christian witness in Indian must be sensitive to the way it communicates its message – as Lall writes (see note 35 above), “It is not our job to denigrate anyone.” Further, the Christian witness in India


39. Lall, Susamācār-Pracār Darśan, 57: Kaï deś piĉchle paĉas varṣoṁ meṁ sāmrājyvād se ājād hue hai. Ab ve svatāntrātā pāṁ gaṅa hai. Svatāntrātā pāṁ acēṭi bāṭ hai. Parantu is svatāntrātā ke sāṭh rāṣṭrīy bhāvānāe tīvr rūpt meṁ kāṁ karne laṛī hain jinke kārān apne-apne deś ki sanskriti ityādi ko baḍhāne kā prayatn kiya jā rahā hai. Masīhī viśvās ko sanskriti-ghāṭak bhātīyā jāṭā hai. Islie jo viśeś se pracārak āte the un par pratibandhāgar kūn kah diyā gayā hai ki unke āne kā āvaśyakatā nahīṅ hai. Deś ki apnī maṇḍī sākhāyā v dhan meṁ itnī saktiśīlī nahīṅ hai ki apne kāry ko sambhāl sake, baḍhānā to asambhāv hai. Kaṭ prakār ke sarkārī dābāv se nirbal viśvāsī maṇḍī ko choḍ kar fir se purāṇe dharmom meṁ cale jāte hain.
should speak to its context and be contextually intelligent – as Anand asks (see note 38 above), “how should we react to the statements of peoples of other faiths?” This witness, in other words, should use language and idioms that speak to its audience; and, it should communicate through actions even as it communicates through words.

Anand, who has spent nearly 30 years promoting Hindi Christian literature, provides particularly valuable insights into the ways in which the relationship of religion and language has affected the content of Hindi Christian guidebooks on Christian witness. Anand draws special attention to the impact of public perception on religious communication. It is helpful to quote him in detail on the subject.

We have received the good news of salvation in written form: the holy Bible. This is the word of God for us. This is our ‘ultimate authority.’ We must implement this ultimate authority in our lives before sharing it with others. Commentary does not attract people, but behavior (does). …

The Hindi area of 21st century north India presents us with a serious problem. When I share the good news of salvation, my listener, audience, reader is a non-Christian, especially my Hindu neighbors. …

From the perspective of language, the Christian community of north India is like Trishanku [i.e., caught between two worlds]40: whenever the Christian character in a Hindi film speaks a language, we can understand this fact. Our foreign brothers have taught us that Hindi is the language of the Hindus, and Urdu that of the Muslims. And English [of the] Christians…. A Christian religious leader can be only a cassock-wearing Roman Catholic Father.

The Hindi Bible that you hold was translated in 1905 by the Presbyterian missionary of Allahabad, Dr. S. H. Kellogg [Samuel Henry Kellogg]. 100 years ago Hindi was only a spoken language used in some districts of Uttar Pradesh and the Mahakaushal region of Madhya Pradesh. Dr. Kellogg translated according to the situation 100 years ago. Today the situation is completely different. Hindi is the national language – a language of contact used in Akashwani [India’s radio broadcaster], Doordarshan [India’s T.V.

40. In the Ramayana, Trishanku enters heaven while alive (i.e., in bodily form) with the help of the great sage Vishwamitra. Due to a prior curse on Trishanku, however, the Lord of the Gods Indra refuses him a stay in heaven and tosses him out. As Trishanku falls from heaven, he prays to Vishwamitra, who suspends him between the two worlds of heaven and earth and places seven saints and numerous stars in the sky to accompany Trishanku, who is destined to live between the worlds above (heaven) and below (earth). (My thanks to Richard Delacy, Department of South Asian Studies, Harvard, for this insight)
broadcaster], newspapers, magazines from Srinagar to Kanyakumari [north to south], Kuch-Saurashtra to Arunachal Pradesh [west to east]. Its vocabulary and form have completely changed. The meanings of key words have changed and new words have been introduced into Hindi to express new ideas.

If a communicator does not use the language understood by a receiver of the ‘good news of salvation,’ the good news becomes bad news [and] meaning is lost.  

The Hindi Christian community is like Trishanku – neither here nor there – because it is caught between its own Hindi cultural world and the English cultural world that has been assigned to it in the popular imagination. The mis-association of language with religions – where ‘Hindi is for Hindus’ – and insensitivity to cultural idioms and contexts, for which both religious and secular parties are guilty, have further complicated the communication of Christian ideas in Hindi-speaking areas.

The concern with public depictions of Christianity is driven, it seems, by a desire to present Hindi Christianity in a credible and recognizable way as both Christian in content and Hindi in expression in a way that asserts for Christianity a very Hindi ‘home-base.’ Guidebooks by Hindi Christian authors on communication are, as we have seen in the case of Lall’s *Susamācār-Pracār*

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21-vīṁ šatābdī kā uttar bhārat kā hindi kṣetr, hamāre sāmne ek gambhir samasāy hāi. Jah maiṁ muki kā śubh sandeś sunāne kā bāt karta hūṁ tab mere śrotā, darśak, pāṭhak, gair masīhī, višeśākar mere Parośī hindū hote hain. ...

Uttar bhārat kā masīhī samaj bhāṣā kī driṣṭi se triśanku hai: kadācit hindī filmoṁ kā koī īsāī pātr jo bhāṣā boltā hai, usse hum is tathy ko samajh sakte haiṁ. Hamāre videśī bhāṣāṅoṁ ne hameṁ sikhāyā ki hindī hinduoṁ kī bhāṣā hai, aur urdū musalāmāṅoṁ ki. Aur īsāī aṁgrezī….. Īsāī dharmāṅguru kesak pahanne vālā keval roman kātholik fādar hī ho sakā hain.


‘Muki kā śubh samācār’ ghoṣit karte samay yadi sampresak us bhāṣā kā prayog nahi kartā jo sandeś grahaṅ karne vālā samajhā hain to śubh sandeś asubh sandeś ho jātā hain, arth kā anarth ho jātā hain.
Darśan (1970), Anand’s Samprêṣan (1994), and Howell’s Parivartan (2006), particularly rich sources to understand the public concerns of Hindi Christian authors. Another valuable source is, however, an examination of the fate of Bāibal kī Kahāniyāṁ (“Stories of the Bible”), a short-lived Hindi-language Christian program on Doordarshan, India’s national television broadcaster. An analysis of the debate around the early cancellation of Bāibal kī Kahāniyāṁ (or, BKK hereafter) sheds valuable light on the way in which prominent Hindi-speaking Christians have sought to manage public depictions of Christianity in India. Anand discusses this episode in his guidebook on Christian communication (Samprêṣan).

He writes:

The Doordarshan serial “Bāibil kī Kahāniyāṁ”42 [Stories of the Bible] is another important example. The enthusiasm and excitement with which nearly 100 million viewers watched its first and second episode and turned off their T.V. sets in its third and fourth episodes. The reason was Arabic-Farsi laden Urdu. Our neighbors had asked us whether the language of the Bible was similar to that of the ‘Quran’? What miscommunication. The good news became bad news. …

I was talking to a senior official of Doordarshan regarding the script for the serial ‘Bāibil kī Kahāniyāṁ.’ Regarding the language she/he43 said, ‘Anandji, is such language appropriate for a national program?’

The living good news of salvation should be communicated effectively to millions through a living language only. And for this a firm grasp [“complete knowledge”] of languages is important. If I am an inhabitant of the Hindi language, my region of work is the Hindi region [and] I should know the Hindi language. I should study it in its proper form.44

42. Anand spelled the Hindi (“Bāibil kī Kahāniyāṁ”) differently than Doordarshan did (“Bāibal kī Kahāniyāṁ”) – with no difference in meaning.
43. The original Hindi pronoun (unhone) is gender non-specific.

‘Bāibil kī kahāniyāṁ’ sīriyal kī pāṇḍulipi ke sambandh mein dūrdarśan ke uccādhikārī se bāt ho rahī thi. Bhāṣā ke sambandh mein unhomne kahā, ‘ānand sāhab, kyā aist bhāṣā rāśtrīy kārykram ke lie upyukt hai?’

Mukti kā jīvit śubh sandeś jīvit bhāṣā ke mādhyam se hi karoḍom logōṁ mein sārthak dhàng se sampreṣit honā cāhie. Aur iske lie āvāsyak hai bhārat kī bhāṣāōṁ kā pārnāgyān. Yadi maiṁ hindī bhāṣā kā nivāsī hūṁ, merā kāry kṣetr hindī bhāṣā kṣetr hai to mujhe hindī bhāṣā kā gyān honā cāhie. Uskā vidhivat adhyayan kamnā cāhie.
Anand is quite aware that Urdu-Hindi is not foreign to Christians and Christian communities in India. He was general editor of a Hindi-language introduction to Islam in 2004 that included a chapter on Jesus in the Qur’an\textsuperscript{45} and edited an introduction to Christianity in India and Pakistan in 1994 that examined Christian schooling in Hindi, Urdu, and English in Lucknow.\textsuperscript{46} In a popular translated textbook on communication and Indian Christian spirituality, Anand invites the readers to explore and adopt expressions of spirituality found in the many religious traditions in India.\textsuperscript{47} Urdu was, in other words, not quite an ‘other’ or ‘improper’ language for Christians in north India. Further, the evidence from a linguistic analysis of the first four episodes of BKK suggests that there was more linguistic fluidity than Anand acknowledges.

The Hindi script of BKK uses a wide range of loan words, including Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian ones. The script of BKK, I would then offer, reflects a bold decision on the part of the producers and writers of the serial: Indian Christians are polyglots and should relate to a range of linguistic influences on BKK’s script. The first two episodes, as an instance, liberally sprinkle Sanskritic words in the narrator’s voiceover and the characters’ dialogues: \textit{vṛks}, \textit{gyān}, \textit{manusy}, \textit{iśvar}, \textit{ādimānav}, \textit{vyāpt}, \textit{nārī}, \textit{ādeś}, \textit{šāp}, all appear in the first two episodes. They also include \textit{kaśṭī} (boat), \textit{khudā} (God), and \textit{khāndān} (family), Persian loan words. In the second episode, Noah prays to his \textit{khudā}.

The third episode noticeably departs from the first two in script and tone. It relies frequently on \textit{khudā} (which replaces \textit{iśvar} has the divine name of choice) and other “Muslim” words – or words in the popular imagination most associated with Muslims in India – like \textit{qabīlā} (Arabic,

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{45} Bhajan and Khan, \textit{Islām}, 234-46.
\item\textsuperscript{46} Dayal, \textit{Uttar Bhārat aur Pākistān}, 201.
\item\textsuperscript{47} Anand and Warne, \textit{Samprēṣaṇ}, 156-57.
\end{itemize}
tribe), be-aulād (Persian, child-less), and āqā (Turkish, lord) and introduces numerous Urdu phrases and idioms. Given this diversity, then, one could argue that the writers and producers of BKK and the governmental managers at Doordarshan who approved it to air took an assimilative approach to the religious language of Christianity in India.

First aired on December 20, 1992, BKK debuted on the Sunday morning slot succeeding T.V. series like the The Ramayana, The Mahabharata, and the Urdu-language The Sword of Tipu Sultan, three of the most popular Sunday morning television programs of the late 80s and early 90s at a time when a vast majority of the households did not have cable and Doordarshan serials were premier weekend programs. Bāibal kī Kahāniyāṁ aired for 15 episodes and discontinued in May 1993, before being revived for a short run in June 1996. Purnima Mankekar, an eminent media critic of Indian television, has shown that in the hands of state-appointed committees Doordarshan played a powerful role in promoting nation building and integration through prime-time programs (from 8:40 to 11:00 p.m. every evening and from 9:00 a.m. to noon on Sundays). Also known as ‘National Programmes,’ these prime-time broadcasts “were a major component of the effort to construct a pan-Indian ‘national culture’.”48 BKK, then, represents the interest of the state in supporting a minority religious tradition, and its short life a reminder of the inability of its Christian and governmental sponsors to withstand market, cultural, and religious forces.

Explanations of BKK’s demise are themselves contradictory and reveal tensions between etic and emic accounts of events. Anand attributes BKK’s demise to a drastic decline in its popularity from millions of viewers to turned-off televisions due to the misapplication of culture to content – the use of Arabic-Urdu in a Christian program. Christian media accounts from the time further

point to a controversy in Muslim-dominated areas on BKK’s depiction of prophets in human form. With a militant insurgency raging in Jammu and Kashmir, and bomb threats to Doordarshan offices and employees, the broadcaster decided to suspend BKK in 1993.49 Mankekar, however, points to BKK’s lackluster popularity among Indian audiences as the primary reason for its demise. Such a decline is, in her analysis, not linked to the language of the script. BKK failed to inspire loyalty, even among Christian viewers. Further, in Mankekar’s narrative, BKK was rather uncontroversial in nature and content.50

Written in 1994 when Bāibal kī Kahāniyāṁ was off the air, Anand’s comment expressed a timely concern. BKK was, after all, the first Christian serial to be aired by India’s largest broadcaster in prime time and its short run did not particularly put Christian hearts and minds at ease with regards to the place of their foundational stories in the national religious narrative. Especially when compared to the success and influence of Hindu serials like The Ramayana and The Mahabharata, which lived on for many years in syndicated reruns, the quick demise of BKK readily stood out.

Anand’s view must, however, also be recognized for its pragmatic intent. His explanation that linguistic confusion cut short BKK’s life hints toward the very real way in which religio-linguistic identities have practically functioned and continue to function in modern India. For a majority of Hindus, Urdu is the language of Muslims and English that of Christians. For many Christians – as reflected in Anand’s view quoted above – Urdu is the cultural language of

Muslims. Hence the perception of confusion among viewers by the use of Urdu instead of non-Urdu Hindi or of English in a Christian program.

Anand’s concern with the introduction of ‘Quranic language’ in a Hindi Christian show, it can then be argued, stems partly from his lifelong interest in the Hindi-karan [or, Hindi-isation] of Christianity in India and from his desire to move Christianity away from its primary (and sometimes exclusive) association with English cultural worlds, as depicted most conspicuously in Hindi songs and Bollywood films. It stems partly also from an attempt to popularize and establish Hindi literature and resources among Christians in central and north India, a goal in which the H.T.L.C. under Anand’s editorship has particular investment and interest. The location of the discussion on the Christian use of Urdu on Doordarshan in a book on communicating the Good News further represents the desire among Hindi Christian authors to present an identifiable Christian witness with a distinguishable Christian vocabulary in their religiously plural context.

As Anand writes of the Christian witness,

> God has placed us Christians in a special situation: our neighbors are Hindu, Muslim, Jain, Buddhist, etc. Even their religion, faith, and culture are different. In faith we are living in a multifaith and multicultural context. On the other hand, as a minority religious community, how do we share the last commission of Jesus Christ with our neighbor?  

At the same time, however, Anand argues that Hindi Christians should not ignore their cultural context. A-cultural language in the Hindi Bible, he asserts, has also undermined the effectiveness and perception of the Hindi Christian witness. The (earlier) use of non-honorific language by

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Christians is a prime example of a disconnect between Hindi Christians and their cultural context.

Another important thing: you use the honorific “you” for Christ the Lord in your conversations, in your prayer. This is our Indian culture. But when we read the Bible on Akashwani [India’s national radio], Doordarshan [India’s national TV], in public gatherings and use pronouns like you, your [in non-honorific form], we have to bow our head in shame. ‘Jesus went,’ ‘Jesus said!’ [in non-honorific forms].

There is clearly an attention paid in Lall’s and Anand’s guidebooks to the role and effectiveness of Hindi and to the ways in which Christians deal with the challenges that accompany religious life in a Hindi cultural world. Lall’s and Anand’s manuals clue us into the many ways in which social location and objective – religious status, cultural effectiveness, public witness, Christian witness – have shaped ethical and practical advice.

The impact of social location on ethical formation is also evident in the way in which reflections on the role of women in congregations have shaped the struggle between patriarchy and equality in discourses on ‘proper’ Christian living in Hindi Christian texts. The issue of gender or women’s roles in congregations has, in other words, impacted Hindi Christian discourses on discipleship in particular ways. But, as Elizabeth Schüessler Fiorenza has argued in *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation* (2000), gender itself is marked through specific discourses. While Hindu women, as an instance, “largely control” ritual and religious practices outside “Sanskritic, Brahminical Hindu environments” (which remain largely the purview of Hindu males), their practices are “not isolated from social, cultural, domestic, or larger religious roles or frames of

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meaning.” In her introduction to the excellent study of women’s religious lives in India, *Women’s Lives, Women’s Rituals in the Hindu Tradition*, Tracy Pintchman further writes that such practices are “a type of performance that is inherently constructive and strategic, producing specific types of meaning and values through particular strategies.”

For Hindi Christian guidebooks, roles for women and men are set in social and congregational terms. It would not be particularly insightful to state that women and men are accorded different roles among Hindi-speaking Christian communities. It is, however, noteworthy that Christian women and men are not excluded from any particular roles in church and society and share responsibility for their family and personal actions. While familiar gender expectations emerge in Hindi Christian guidebooks, some guidebooks like the *Mahilā Dharmāvijñān Pāthya-Pustak* (Women’s Theological Text Book) by Elizabeth James in 1978 exemplify the two facets of gender relations in Hindi Christian churches: women are considered as church leaders with an equal role in congregational and social affairs, yet Christian women are expected to play a supportive role in congregational and social life.

In *Mahilā Dharmāvijñān Pāthya-Pustak* (MDPP hereafter), the chapter on *mahilā kāry* (women’s work) begins with a section on *pastar kī dharmāpatnī* (the pastor’s wife). The list of attributes expected of a pastor’s wife includes the following: she should “treat the other women and people in the community with love.” She should be able to “listen to sorrowful stories and comfort those in pain,” be a “dedicated Christian woman” (dedicated to her husband and the church, presumably), “truthful, friendly and peaceful,” and somebody who can “listen, give

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timely counsel, and keep things in confidence” (since she should be one with whom congregants can share their problems and concerns). She should, further, accompany her pastor husband in all his responsibilities.

Immediately after the section on “pastor kī dharmāpatnī,” a section on “śahar aur dehāt mein mahilā kāry” (women’s ministry in city and village) follows. This section complicates attempts to limit Christian women to the supportive role accorded them in the previous section. Here James deploys scriptural insights about the early church – a strategic use of both scripture and tradition – to assert the sharing on a comparable basis of roles and responsibilities among Christian men and women in local congregations. James makes a rich case, and quoting her at length is appropriate (emphasis added):

Women have played a major role in evangelism and in the life of the congregation. From the very beginning our Lord considered women equal to men in grace and ministry (see Jn. 4:7 ff.; Mk. 5:23 ff.; Lk. 10:38-42). It is acknowledged that the Lord did not send women like [he sent] the disciples with the power to perform miracles, but within the community of disciples they have played a special role to serve, accompany, and host (Lk. 8:2; Mk. 15:40 ff.). Some of those women were the first witnesses to the resurrection (Mk. 16:1). Women had a special place in Jesus’s parables. The book of Acts and the epistles mention many women who assisted in preaching the good news (Acts 1:14; 12:12; 16:13 ff.; Rom. 16:1, 3; 1 Cor. 1:11; Col. 4:15; 2 Tim. 1:5; Philem. 4:2-3). Women managed various responsibilities in the congregation. For instance, Phoebe was a deaconess in the congregation in Cenchreae (Rom. 16:1); Priscilla instructed Apollos

55. James, Mahilā Dharmāvijñān, 227: [S]amāj meṁ rahnevālī bahanoṁ se aur any sadasyoṁ se prem ke sāth vyavāhār kar sake. ... dukhbharī kahāniyāṁ sun saktī hai aur dukhit hridayoṁ ko śānti de saktī hai. ... samarpit masīhī mahilā. ... saccī, mitrātāpūrṇ aur śālīn ... logoṁ kī bāt sunne, unko ucit smay par salāh dene, aur gopanīy bātoṁ ko man mein rakhne ki kṣamātā honī cāhiye.

56. James, Mahilā Dharmāvijñān, 228: Pati ke samast dāyitv mein uskā saprem sāth de.

57. Though, as Schüssler Fiorenza notes, New Testament accounts reveal signs of an “androcentric process of redaction” where the role of women in the early church appears to have been qualified (Discipleship of Equals, 159-61).

58. Ḍīkanes (“deaconess”) is a problematic translation. As Schüssler Fiorenza notes, “deaconess” has been used as more than a gender-equivalent term to mean a lesser “servant” or “helper” (Discipleship of Equals, 157). James’s translation veers in this direction. Old and new Hindi Bibles, James’s most probable sources, lack ḍīkanes. The 1909, 1989, and 2004 translations all use sevikā (servant, female) for the Greek diaconon. Though the 1989 and 2004 Hindi Bibles were published after James’s original print in 1978, the consistency of sevikā across the three versions suggests that it is the most likely word James would have encountered if she had referred to a Hindi Bible in 1978. On the one hand, then, it can be argued that in her guidebook James elevates Phoebe’s status by naming her a “deaconess” – a term with clerical resonance and one that connotes a communally-recognized position – rather
(Acts 18:24-26); Titus 2:3-5 mentions women presbyters; widows prayed ceaselessly (1 Tim. 5:5). It also appears that there were prophetesses in the early church (Acts 21:9). Saint Paul calls women ‘my co-workers’ (Rom. 16:3). It can be assumed that through our Lord Jesus Christ and due to the attitude of the early church toward women, the status of women in human society has been lifted up.

According to this tradition, today women are serving congregations in numerous ways, including as pastors and presbyters in some congregations. Women have the right to vote in congregations; they serve the congregation in many ways, serve as Bible women [or, evangelists], women teach in schools, work in hospitals, are missionaries, assistant pastors, etc.

Women have congregational, inter-congregational, and international associations and societies. It is a matter of much pride that those hostels, schools, hospitals and organizations that are in women’s hands are excelling in many areas.59

than a “servant.” Her departure from Hindi scripture is symbolic of a re-evaluation of women’s role in churches. Such an interpretation is supported by her larger thesis in the section where she discusses Phoebe: women were influential leaders and teachers in the early church and modern women church leaders stand in this long tradition. On the other hand, when “deaconess” is understood as a demotion from “deacon” – which need not be the case – James is subject to Schüssler Fiorenza’s critique.

Unlike Hindi translations of diaconon, those of prostasis in Rom. 16:2 have undergone changes. According to the 1989 Hindi Bible, Phoebe provides the community and Paul with “help” (sahāyatā), but the 1909 and 2004 versions accord her a greater position in society as the upkāriṇī (“one who provides favors” or a benefactor) to congregants and to Paul (bahutoni kī varan merī bhi ṣupkāriṇī). Changes in the status of Phoebe in the Hindi Bibles parallel similar developments in English-language depictions of her role. As an instance, the Revised Standard Version calls her a “deaconess” and a “helper” while the New Revised Standard Version calls her a “deacon” or “minister” and a “benefactor.” Interestingly, translations of suņerous mou are consistent across the five Bibles compared here – mere sahākarmī (“my co-workers”) in the 1909, 1989, and 2004 Hindi Bibles; “my fellow workers” (RSV) and “work with me” (NRSV).

59. James, Mahīlā Dharmāvijñān , 231-32: Kalīstiyā ke jīvan aur pracār kāry mein striyōn kā bhārī hāth rahā hai. Hamāre prabhu ne ārambh se hī strī ko anugrah aur sevā mein puruś ke barābar mānā hai (dekhie yūhannā 4:7 kramik pad; markus 5:23 se āge; lūkā 10”38-42). Yah mānā ki striyōn ko celaṁ aścaryākarm karne kī sāmarth sahit prabh ne nahin bhejā, parantu celaṁ ko celaṁ sevā, sahāyatā aur ātithy satkār mein unkā visē bhāg rahā (lūkā 8:2; markus 15:40 se āge). Unmeṁ se kucch striyāṁ punuruthit khrist kī sarvpratham gavāh thīṁ (markus 16:1). Yīśu ke drīṣṭāntoṁ mein striyōn ko mahatvapuruṁ sthān hai. Preritoṁ ke kām aur patronyoṁ mein anek striyōn kā ulekh hai jo susamācār pracār mein sahāyak thīṁ (preritoṁ ke kām 1:14; 12:12; 16:13 se āge; romiyoṁ 16:1, 3; 1 kurinthiyōn 1:11; kulassiyōn 4:15; 2 tīmuthiyuṁ 1:5; filemon 4:2-3). Kalīstiyā mein striyāṁ anek prakār kī jīvanāryān sambhāltī thīṁ. Udāharaṁ ke liye, fībe kriyāvāyā kī mandīl mein dīkanes thī (romiyoṁ 16:1); priskillā ne apullos kā praśikṣan kīyā (pre. 18:24-26); titus 2:3-5 mein presbiṭar mahilāoṁ kā ulekh hai; vidhvāeṁ parhit prārthānā kī sevā mein lagi rahā thī (1 tīm. 5:3). Aisā prāti hotā hai kī prārambhik kalīstiyā mein nabyā bhi thī (pre. 21:9). Sant paulus striyōn ko ‘mere sahākarmī’ kaṁtā hai (ro. 16:3). Yah mānā jā saktā hai ki hamāre prabhu yīśu khrist ke dvārā aur striyōn ko prārthā prakṛbhī kalīstiyā kī abhivritti ke kāraṁ manānav samadīj mein striyōn kā star ūṁcā huā hai.

Is paramparā ke anurūp āj mahilāeṁ kalīstiyā mein anek prakār se sevā kar rahī hain, yahāṁ tak ki kucch kalīstiyāoṁ mein unko pādrī yā presbiṭar bhi banāyā gayā hain. Strīyon ko kalīstiyā mein mādān kā adhikār hain; ve mandāli mein anek rūpoṁ mein sevā kartī hai, bābīl vīmen pracār kāry kartī hain, mahilāeṁ kākoṁ mein sikhā detī hain, aspatāliōn mein kāry kartī hain, mīnārī hain, sahāyak pādrī hain, ādi. Mahilāoṁ ki kalīstiyā, antar-kalīstiyā aur antaraśtrīy sahāeṁ aur sangathan hain. Yah baṁe śrey kī bāt hai ki ve hostel, skāl, aspatāl aur samsthāeṁ jo mahilāoṁ ke hāth mein hain kā bātoṁ mein śreśṭḥ hain.
Further, women are co-participants in the ministry of preaching. As a result, MDPP makes no
distinction in the advice it offers women and men regarding preaching. Both are given the
following tips:

- The best verses and topics are received when in prayer on one’s knees.
- Never prepare the sermon first and then search for the verses.
- Present the weaker points first and save the stronger points for last.
- A sermon should be applicable to life and it should also have personal appeal.
- After preparing your sermon, practise it. Check your pronunciation, delivery, and
  biblical references. Write your sermon or prepare notes for it. Be of strong faith that
  God will bless your work.  

Preaching and communicating is an essential task of both women and men and no gender-based
distinctions exist, to the best of my knowledge, in the vast majority of Hindi Christian
guidebooks I have examined in the ability and responsibility of a Christian to provide public
witness to faith. Yet inequalities exist in practice and attitudes. Winifred Paul’s Strīyoṁ kā
Parameśvar ke Sāth Calnā (2008) is a symptom of this tussle between ‘imbalanced’ roles and
the sort of ‘gender-shared’ Christianity James describes. In her guidebook, Paul gives advice to
Christian women in their capacity as wives and co-workers and, unlike James, ignores the
leadership roles that Christian women have played in Indian congregations.

Paul writes,

Modern women are able in various ways. They are appropriate for various types of
works. … They can serve the congregation by offering advice on congregational
decisions, in the form of evangelists who win souls, by preparing the Eucharist, by
teaching the good news to children, by running prayer cells, by leading the youth, by
doing Sunday School work, by running the women’s group, by visiting congregants who

60. James, Mahilā Dharmāvijñān, 234-35: Sab se acche pad aur viṣay vahūṁ hote haiṁ jo guṭhnoṁ par
prārthānā ke samay updeśak ko milte haiṁ. … Yah kahī na kariye ki āp updeś pahle taiyār kar leṁ aur tab pad
dhūṁdhate fireṁ. … Āp ke jordār vicār binduoṁ ko ākhir mein aur kamjor vicār binduoṁ ko pahle rakhiye. … Updeś
ko jīvan par lāgū karnā cāhiye aur usmenṁ vyaktigat apīl bhi honā cāhiye. … Apne updeś ko soc lene ke bād updeś
dene kā abhyās kījie. Āp ke uccāraṁ, abhivyakti, bāibal ke sandarbh thik se niscit hoṁ. Āp apnā updeś likh leṁ yā
uske noṭs banā leṁ. Yah pakkā bharosā rakhiye ki parameśvar āpke kāṁ par āśiś degā.

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uske noṭs banā leṁ. Yah pakkā bharosā rakhiye ki parameśvar āpke kāṁ par āśiś degā.
are ill, by caring for widows and orphans, by typing, by collecting gifts, by providing hospitality, and above all by smiling.\textsuperscript{61}

Compared to James’s description, Paul’s vision is noticeably different and clearly limited. There is no reference to women pastors. The ability to smile makes a strange appearance. Women play a secondary role to men. They advise on decisions, but seem absent as decision-makers. They lead ‘sub-groups’ but do serve as pastors. Like James, Paul also lists many women leaders in the Bible. But, unlike James, Paul uses them as historical details rather than instructional tools for modern congregations. Where James draws lessons from the early church to promote women leadership, Paul simply acknowledges that the Bible shows that Jesus did not exclude women (\textit{masīh kī driṣṭi meṁ striyāṁ achūt nahīṁ thī}).\textsuperscript{62}

Like the struggle between equality and caste-based discrimination that has been the subject of much Dalit theology, the tussle between equality and patriarchy reflected in the guidebooks by James (1978) and Paul (2008) has another implication for studies of Hindi-speaking churches: it complicates models of Indian Christianity that present Christianity as an egalitarian intervention into Indian society.\textsuperscript{63} Paul’s work, more than the work of James, reflects this struggle. For instance, on the one hand, she writes, Christian women should be obedient.\textsuperscript{64} On the other hand, she “also has the right to obey God above humans.”\textsuperscript{65} Like James, Paul further argues that men

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{61} Paul, \textit{Striyoṁ kā Parameśvar ke Sāth Calnā}, 217: \textit{Ādhunik striyāṁ anek prakār se yogy hoṭī haiṁ. Vah kaī tarah ke kāryōnī ko liye uctī rahtī hai. ... Vah kalīsiyā kī sammatiyoṁ par salāḥākārī ke vibhāv menṁ, ātmā jūne kī upcārikā ke rūp men, prabhūbhōj tahēr karne ke lie, baccom ko susamācār ke bāre mem batāne ke liye, prārthānā maṇḍāliyoṁ ko calāne ke lie, yuvā kī aguvāit karne ke dvārā, sanḍe skūl menṁ kāry karke, striyoṁ kī sangati ko calākar, kalīsiyā ke bimāroṁ ke pā jākar, vidhāvāoṁ evam anāthom kī dekhbhāl karke, jankār kāry (ṭāīping) karke, dān ekārit karke, āgantuk satkārī hokar, aur in sabke ūpar muskurā kar, kalīsiyā kī sevākāi kar sakīō hai.}
\item \textsuperscript{62} Paul, \textit{Striyoṁ kā Parameśvar ke Sāth Calnā}, 116.
\item \textsuperscript{63} Cf. Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{Discipleship of Equals}, 152, note 2.
\item \textsuperscript{64} Paul, \textit{Striyoṁ kā Parameśvar ke Sāth Calnā}, 15.
\item \textsuperscript{65} Paul, \textit{Striyoṁ kā Parameśvar ke Sāth Calnā}, 32: \textit{Uskā yah bhī adhikār hai ki manusy kī apekṣā parameśvar kī āgyā pālan kare.}
\end{itemize}
and women serve certain social roles on earth, yet “there is no male and female in heaven. Gender differences are only on earth, there is no gender difference in heaven.” A Christian woman has “authority over her husband, children, and home” yet, she “should not exert authority over men.”

**THE SOCIAL GOALS OF GOOD WORKS**

Though different in tone, content, topic, and audience, the manuals of James, Paul, Anand, and Lall share a common feature: they present themselves in service of a Christian formation that is pressed in service of larger social goals. Hindi Christian guidebooks self-report three objectives: discipleship (we should follow God and Christ), public responsibility (we are accountable to God and society), and social witness (we are witnesses to society and our witness to society matters).

Where Anand and Lall use their guidebooks to comment on relations between Christians and their other-faith neighbors and to promote strategies to offer a ‘friendly’ Christian witness as a minority faith, the works of Elizabeth James and Winifred Paul are more geared towards Christian contributions to social development and general community relations. This difference, however, must be understood in the context of the common element among the works of Anand, Lall, James, and Paul, namely, their interest in offering insights that build Christian character and discipleship. The tone for James’ work, as an instance, is set early by C. W. David, who oversaw

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the first print of MDPP in 1978 as the editor of H.T.L.C. at the time. “For the benefit of the church and the land of India, [and] with the writers and compiler of this book, we too dedicate this [book] at the feet of our Lord Jesus Christ who is worthy of worship,” David writes.  

In her chapter on ethics, James asserts that ethical reflection includes reflections on the nature of ethics, sources of ethics, models for ethical behavior, and on the creation of ethical dispositions. Christian ethics, which draws insights from Christ, further, is “two-fold”: in it “spirituality and ethics are deeply related” and therefore it is “necessary” for a Christian to be “certain” on the “principles that shape [her] behavior.”

These behaviors, in turn, help a Christian fulfill her social obligations to her society and her nation. “[She] is responsible to her family, her society, [and] to her nation….” And a list of responsibilities accompanies the chapter by James on Christian ethics: “those who have rights are ethically obligated to use them for the benefit of all”; “respect life, protect yourself, protect your health, avoid suicide and do not kill”; “do not use wealth as an end but as a means to benefit others”; “respect other peoples’ property”; “develop [your] mind, knowledge, and well being”;
“tell the truth, control your desires, attitudes, and passions”; and “maintain self-control and self-worth, respect character and social order; perform difficult tasks with speed and honesty.”

This list is visibly non-religious in nature with wider appeal because James understands Christian ethical responsibilities in light of and as a “reflection” of general human rights and responsibilities. She explains,

Society is the source of rights. Society endows people with rights along with some conditions. The condition is that those who have been given rights use them appropriately and do not use them to bring harm to others. The respect and value of a person are reflected in the rights available to a human in Christian ethics. These are the rights of a human: (1) the right to life and work, (2) the right to education. (3) The right to freedom. (4) The right to property. (5) The right to enter an agreement or contract.

In James’s view, Christian ethics stem from a social contract and as a result reflect the respect and values inherent in general human rights. The prescriptive advice of James’s manual to witness one’s faith toward social growth and development is also echoed in other Hindi Christian guidebooks in their persistent attention to the extra-communal aspects of religious communications.

74. James, *Mahilā Dharmāvijñān*, 107-8: Adhikār jinke pās haiṁ unkā yah naitik dāyitv hai ki ve sab ke kalyāṁ ke liye uskā upāyog kareṁ. ... jīvan ke prati ādar; ātmā-rakṣā; svāsthy rakṣā; ātm hatyā na karnā aur na dāsroṁ ki hatyā karnā. ... dhan ko sādhy rūp mein nahin daran dāsroṁ ki bhalā ke sādhan ke rūp mein arjit karnā cāhiye. Dāsroṁ ki sampatti kā ādar karnā cāhiye. ... buddhi, gyān, kauśal ādi kā vikās [karnā]. ... saty bolnā, apnī icchāoṁ, abhivṛttiyoṁ aur vāsnāoṁ par saṁyam rakhnā. ... ātm-nigrah aur ātm-sammān rakhnā, caritr aur sāmājik vyavasthā kā sammān karnā; gati tathā imānār se kathor śram karnā.


Such a view presents the ideal society to which Christians must aspire and to the creation of which Christians must seek to contribute.
In *Vyaktigat Manan-Cintan* (or, private reflections), Din Dayal articulates a rationale for regular reflections by faithful Christians in terms that speak both to notions of personal responsibility and social witness.

O Lord of my life, I will follow your laws with happiness; I will remain with you joyfully, I will serve you faithfully. Since you are sending me to work this new day, I pray on my knees before you.\(^{76}\)

The prayer continues,

Grant me that I do not break the promises made earlier, and that I do not fail to correct the mistakes I have made. Grant me that if I come upon a sojourner in need, I do not walk away. Grant me that I do not leave responsibilities unmet and that I do not allow a bad habit to take hold. Where my work may make the world a better place for others, where my words may uplift someone in pain or strengthen the weak in spirit, where my prayers may work to spread the kingdom of Jesus Christ, give me the ability to act, speak, and pray there.\(^{77}\)

The prayer concludes,

*O Lord, instruct me,*

*Give me humility in acts, and strength in character,*

*Give me patience,*

*Give me a good disposition,*

*Give me truth in all things,*

*Give me the commitment to do the things that have been handed to me.*\(^{78}\)

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76. Dayal, *Vyaktigat Manan-Cintan*, 10: *Mere jīvan ke svāmī, maiṁ terī vidhiyoṁ kā ānand se pālan karūṁgā: terī sangati meṁ maiṁ saharṣ rahūṁgā, terī sevā maiṁ imāndārī se karūṁgā. Jab ki tū mujhe is naye din meṁ kām karne bhej rahā hai, maiṁ tere sāmne ghuṭne ṭek kar prārthānā kartā hūṁ.*

77. Dayal, *Vyaktigat Manan-Cintan*, 10: *Var de ki maiṁ ne jo pahle pratigyāyeṁ kī haiṁ, unhe na todū aur jo galtiyāṁ kī haiṁ, unko binā sudhāre na choḍā. Var de ki yadi maiṁ kiśī humrāḥī ko sankaṭ meṁ dekhūṁ to katrā kar na calā jāāṁ. Var de ki maiṁ kartavy ko pāṛā kīy bagair na choḍ dāin aur na kiśī burī ādat ko kāyam rahne dūṁ. Jahāṁ merā koī kārya sansār ko manusyoṁ ke rahne ke lie behtar banā saktā hai, jahāṁ merā vacan kiśī nirāś man ko protsāhān de saktā hai yā kamjor icchā-śaktivāle ko driṅh kar saktā hai, jahāṁ merī prārthānā muktītāt prabhū yeṣu ke rājy ko vistrīt kar saktā hai, vahāṁ mujhe karne, bolne aur prārthānā karne ki sāmārthy de.*

78. Dayal, *Vyaktigat Manan-Cintan*, 10: *He prabhū, āj mujhe śiṣṭātā de,*

*Mujhe ācaraṇ meṁ vīnamrataṁ, aur caritr meṁ driṅhtā de,*

*Mujhe sahanśakti de,*

*Mujhe saddhāv de,*

*Mujhe bātoṁ meṁ saccā de,*

*Mujhe aupe gac kāmōṁ ko karne kī lagan de.*
Christ is owed one’s being and actions. Hindi guidebooks routinely emphasize the dependence of a Christian’s witness on the creative power of God. As Dayal further explains:

Dear Father, protect me today. Keep all my thoughts and feelings today under control, direct my abilities. Instruct my wisdom. Take care of my will. Take my hands and make me quick to obey your commands. Take my eyes and keep them affixed on your eternal beauty. Take my mouth and make it a strong witness of your love. Make this day a day of obedience, spiritual joy, and peace. Make the words of this day a part of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the savior.79

Where Dayal’s prayer is directed to individual believers, Franklin Jonathan (1994) addresses church leaders (clergy and elders) with regards to their special role as public communicators. Addressing bishops, then, he writes, “among the people outside the church, among community at large, we are recognized by those works of our lives that are visible in our institutions, programs, and social work.” “We should be recognized,” he further explains, “by the ways in which we fulfill our obligations.”80 Jonathan writes specifically to bishops in the performance of their public roles because they represent their communities to wider societies. Probity in Christian witness is particularly incumbent on clergy, Jonathan notes, because they represent the public leadership of Christian communities.

Whether in the form of private or public witness, as individuals or communities, or independently or as leaders of communities, Christians in India communicate their faith as members of a minority faith that exists among people of many other larger faiths. As a result,


Hindi Christian guidebooks have played special attention to the act of religious communication from a minority faith position. Anand, Dayal, James, Lall, Patlia, Paul, and Vashisht, then, each speak to the particular ways in which being a minority has impacted the response of Christian communities to their self-understood call to preach and evangelize.

As a minority community, Patlia writes in *Pāstarī Viddhyā* (1968), Christians must seek their well-being with care and love. “It is possible that due to the limitations put by the majority community [Christians] cannot fully enjoy their rights.” In such contexts, he continues, Christians should “when needed resist with peace [non-violence\textsuperscript{81}] and love in such a way that even the greatest powers are defeated, a great testimony is presented, and the Kingdom of God is advanced.”\textsuperscript{82} A minority community is not without means – it has, as an instance, equal rights and privileges in democratic societies\textsuperscript{83} – and its minority status does not absolve it of its call to witness. Yet, the recognition that the social witness and service of a minority can be affected by the scope of freedom to speak and act accorded it in practical terms leads Patlia to comment on particular ways in which a minority can witness its faith even as it works to participate fully in society and its politics and economics.

\textsuperscript{81} “Peace” in this context should be understood as non-violence because Patlia has Gandhi’s appropriation of Christian ideas like non-violent sacrifice in mind when commenting on particularly Christian ways to resist the curtailments on full social participation by minorities in secular and democratic societies like India where minorities share equal rights and privileges with other citizens. Patlia, *Pāstarī Viddhyā*, 50.


\textsuperscript{83} Patlia, *Pāstarī Viddhyā*, 49: “Where there is the right to democratic freedom, a community, even if in the minority, possesses the freedom to fight for its civil rights.” (Jahāṁ gantantrātmak svatantrātā kā adhikār hai, vahāṁ ek samāj ko, cāhe alpsankhyak hī kyoṁ na ho, apne nāgrik adhikāroṁ ko prāpi karne ke lie sangharṣ karne kī pūri svatantrātā hai.)
Similarly, *Masīhī Ācaraṇ* (1970), the very popular translation of Neill’s *The Christian Character* (1955), strongly suggests attention to public perceptions of Christian activities – both church-oriented and evangelical – by peoples of other faiths. Neill’s original work was written for a Christian audience quite different from India’s Christian community. Yet, C. W. David used his foreword in the Hindi translation to introduce the benefits of Christian education to India’s emerging society by writing that “the acquisition and promulgation of Christian character [was] necessary for global welfare and development.”

One reason for the popularity of *Masīhī Ācaraṇ*, it can be argued, was Neill’s investment in (proper) Christian living and witness. As Neill noted, “even those who are not Christians are aware of the need for Christians to be like Christ. Many people in the world who are not Christians,” he continued, “are well-aware of the behavior of Jesus Christ. They know that Jesus Christ was just, humble, pure, and truthful.” A Christian is called, then, to be like Christ because others have been saying to Christians that while “we cannot see Jesus Christ … we can see you.”

But where Neill’s attention to public perception lacked an attention to relations with people of other faiths, guidebooks by India-based Christians closely attend to Christian witnessing as a
minority community. In this view, as represented in the works of Howell, leader of the Evangelical Fellowship of India, and of Anand, editor-in-chief of the Hindi Theological Literature Committee, Christian witness should be respectful and it should be relational. It should be respectful of the beliefs and practices of people of other faiths. This includes not denigrating other faiths, trying to assert their inferiority to Christianity, and denying the presence of truth in them. Christian witness should also be relational. It should be built on relations rather than on clever apologetics or refutations. It should be open to learning from people of other faiths, including creating Christian theologies that draw from other faith. It should be sensitive to the language used for communicating the Gospel, avoiding language that is hurtful and exclusive.

As a consequence, in his manual on conversion, Howell asks his readers to use respectful words in their evangelism for people of other faiths and their beliefs. Do not call them idolaters, or people of darkness. Refrain from using militaristic terminology like enemy, march, war, army, soldier, war plan, victory, and weapons in mission work. Avoid language that minimizes women. 88 Similarly, Arya deploys a strategic polytradition vocabulary in her poems in order to reach Christians and peoples of other faiths. 89 In his textbook on communication, Anand asks Christians to recognize the baggage associated with the English word “evangelism,” which is linked in the general Indian imagination with Western missions and discipleship. While “evangelism” captures the essence of the “good news,” Anand invites his readers to present the

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good news in an Indian vocabulary.\textsuperscript{90} And finally, in his manual on Christian communication and preaching, Lall asks his readers to witness in the context of respectful and friendly relationships.

A study of not merely the content of Hindi Christian guidebooks but also of the sort of social messages contained in these guidebooks reveals various discernible agendas in them. They seek to communicate concrete ways in which Christian ideals can be applied to quotidian life and in accordance with one’s familial, institutional, and social roles in society and Christian communities. They aim to inculcate and form behaviors, attitudes, and actions that reflect Christian values. They attend to the particular needs of Christian witness in a minority context. They reveal a persistent concern with the need to shape beliefs and practices particularly suited to personal and communal witnessing in religiously plural contexts.

Hindi Christian guidebooks address formative and communicative practices where private and public functions and emotions underlie notions of responsibility and witness. They seek to form particular types of virtuous desires and choices. They exist in the context of organized communities and function in both individual and communal ways. They assert the public nature of personal acts – others watch what a Christian does; admonitions to think theologically with people of other faiths; requests to assimilate with wider cultural forms; and, attention to challenges faced by minority religions and to strategies to overcome them.

This attention to public witness is also prominent in Hindi Christian works on theology and ethics. The speech-act of Christ is elevated as the model to emulate, but presentations of Christ themselves are marked by the desire to inculcate not just proper beliefs but also proper behavior.

\textsuperscript{90} Anand, \textit{Samprêśan}, 6-7.
As a result, Hindi Christian theologies are characterized by an attention to orthopraxy that is inseparable from the attention to Christian theology. The next chapter will address the relationship between Christian theology and ethics and explore the social goals of Hindi Christian theological and ethical literature.
Chapter Five

Theology, Ethics, and Society
A special relationship between what are traditionally considered different forms of Christian discourse – systematic theology and Christian ethics – characterizes Hindi Christian theological literature. In one sense, to describe this literature as theological or ethical introduces a weak distinction. Texts that can be understood as theological or ethical routinely move freely between those modes of Christian discourse. Hindi theological literature rather is – I offer and will show – better understood as theo-ethical or ethico-theological literature, depending on whether the author or authors seek to focus on the theological underpinnings of ethics or the ethical outcomes of theological claims. The monographs that are examined in this chapter reveal this connection.

The relation, however, between theology and ethics in Hindi Christian materials reflects one side of a larger narrative in which Hindi Christian authors put Christian theology-ethics in service of larger social goals, three of which – interfaith relations, public engagement, and Christian identity in pluralist India – have been identified and examined in this chapter. I will show how in each case discussed a theological and/or ethical proposal is put in service of a credible and recognizable Christian witness that is shaped by its need to exist and thrive in relation with the religious beliefs and practices of people of other faiths.

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1. Or, theological analysis that is ‘ordered’ (kramābaddh) in the words of Din Dayal, an influential Hindi Christian theologian; or, that is ‘sequential’ (kramanusār) in the words of Benjamin Khan, a prominent Hindi Christian ethicist, in Māno Yā Na Māno, xiii. In Māsiḥī Dharm Vījñān kā Paricay (2005), Dayal describes systematic theology in this way: “Order is necessary in the presentation of theology. And its result will be systematic theology. This does not mean that [systematic] theology is beyond correction [or revision or improvement]. When systematic theology seeks to clarify Christian beliefs, it faces three questions: 1. What are the sources of systematic theology? 2. By which media have they [the sources] been received? 3. How are the sources used [literally, “what are the standards by which the sources have been used”]?” (Dharm vījñān ke prastutīkaraṇ meṁ kramābaddhātā āvaśyak hai. Tabhī iskā parinām suvyavāsthit dharm vījñān hoga. Iskā arth yah nahin hai ki dharm vījñān mein kisi prakār kā sansodhan sanbhav nahin hai. Māsiḥī viśvās ko jab suvyavāsthit dharm vījñān spaś kartā hai tab uske sāmne tīn praśn uṭhte haiṁ. 1. Suvyavāsthit dharm vījñān ke srot kyā haiṁ? 2. Kis mādhyam se unhe prāpt kiya gayā haiṁ? 3. Kis māpādaṇḍ ke ādhār par un srotoṁ kā prayog kiya gayā haiṁ?) (Dayal, Māsiḥī Dharm Vījñān kā Paricay, 8)
To understand this Christian witness, I have found the works of three Hindi Christian thinkers to be particularly helpful because of the audience they address, their enduring influence on Hindi Christian theological education, and the unity with which they speak despite differences in context and subject matter. These works reveal a careful attention to Christian life in multi-faith India that manifests itself in theologies and ethics that are shaped by the need for interfaith relations.

In *Khristīy Nītiśāstr* (“Christian Ethics”; orig. Hindi, 1981) and *Saṃvād* (“Dialogue”; orig. Hindi, 1994), Benjamin Khan offers a Christian theo-ethical project that invites its Christian readers to learn from their Hindu neighbors in ways that promote interfaith dialogue. *Khristīy Nītiśāstr*’s primary audience was seminaries, seminarians, members of religious groups in universities and Christians in general. It was, hence, written as a textbook to provide a systematic exploration of Christian ethics based on a robust narrative account of Christ’s life and ministry. Given its audience and its mission to shape Christian leaders in India, Khan’s text does not present interfaith learning as a goal in itself. Such learning rather, Khan argues, must be put into practice in ways that promote interfaith relations, a goal that in turn shapes Christian theology and ethics.

Similarly, in *Masīhī Dharm Vijñān kā Paricay* (“An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology”; orig. Hindi, 2005),² Din Dayal examines the importance of Christian public relations in India’s

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² As noted above (page 115, note 97), the official English name on the copyright page lists “An Introduction to the Indian Christian Theology.” The Hindi title, however, simply states ‘*Masīhī Dharm Vijñān kā Paricay,*’ with no mention of it being Indian. That the copyright holder, H.T.L.C., felt it necessary to qualify ‘Christian Theology’ with ‘Indian,’ which is absent from the original Hindi title, suggests and fits H.T.L.C.’s habit of marking its publications as ‘Indian.’ Without this piece of editorial addition, the Hindi title could be translated as “An Introduction of Christian Theology.” (McGregor, *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*, 606, lists the following
pluralist context. Part of this interest can be attributed to Dayal’s career as a top leader with public responsibilities in the Church of North India, one of the largest Protestant denominations among Hindi-speaking Christians. Yet, as I will also show, his commitment to and views on Christian public witness should also be understood in light of his theology of God’s self-revelation and the consequences of such a theology in a multi-religious context.

Finally, in Parivartan: Masīh se Milāp (“Conversion: A Meeting with Christ”; orig. Hindi, 2006) by Richard Howell, we find a text that is focused on the particular needs of doing evangelism as a religious minority. Howell makes a robust case for the impact of minority location on the languages and practices used by Christian evangelists in India. One aspect of this approach – non-confrontational, respectful speech – was examined above in the context of Christian evangelism in Hindi.

If Christians are to not just profess but are also to propagate their faith in India (with an interest in attracting converts), how must they present themselves to people of other faiths? What sort of identity do Indian Christians seek? What are they hoping to achieve by presenting themselves in certain ways? What are the goals of Christian witness? These questions guide the writings of Khan, Dayal, and Howell that are examined below. Given the influence of Khan’s work in Hindi Christian circles – his Christian ethics is a standard text in Hindi-language seminaries and currently in its third edition – and the pioneering nature of his work, I have paid considerable attention to his writings in what follows, before I turn to the more recent works of Dayal and Howell in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

as translations of paricay: acquaintance (with); knowledge, experience (of); information, data; to introduce (one to); to acquaint (with); to make known (to); or, to demonstrate.
ETHICS AND INTERFAITH RELATIONS IN THE WRITINGS OF BENJAMIN KHAN

Khan was born to a Methodist pastor and Christian homemaker in Haryana on September 3, 1927. After schooling in (now) Pakistan, he studied philosophy (M.A.) at Punjab University and earned his doctorate in philosophy (darśanśāstr) from Agra University in 1962. A native speaker of Urdu, he gained expertise in English, Hindi, and Sanskrit, which he studied during doctoral research on the concept of dharma in Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇa. From 1952 he lectured on philosophy at Indore Christian College and from 1963-86 he served as a professor with and the head of the department of philosophy at the College. He published and widely lectured on Indian philosophy and Gandhian thought and served as president of the Board of Studies in Philosophy, dean of the humanities faculty, and member of the University-wide executive committee of Indore University.

Khan made pioneering and original contributions to Hindi Christian literature. These include an introductory book on Islam in 1974 (which won an award from the Uttar Pradesh Government), Khristīy Nītiśāstr (on Christian ethics; 1981), Bīsăvīṁ Śatābdī ke Pramukh Dharmāvijñānī (an

4. Khan’s doctoral dissertation was published in English as The Concept of Dharma in Valmiki Ramayana by Munshi Ram Manohar Lal press (Delhi) in 1965.
5. Both Khristīy Nītiśāstr (viii) and Islām: Ek Paricay (“Islam: An Introduction”; vi) were first and original books in Hindi Christian literature on their subjects. Both books have been quite popular: due to continued demand, Khristīy Nītiśāstr was republished in 2009; Islām: Ek Paricay went through a new edition in 1987 and was republished in 2004.
6. The State of Uttar Pradesh was a seat of power during the Mughal Rule, has one of the highest numbers of Muslims among the Indian States, and boasts many (educational, architectural, and religious) Islamic landmarks in cities like Lucknow, Aligarh, and Agra. Given the history of Islam in Uttar Pradesh, an award from this State for a book on Islam would have carried, it is safe to suggest, a special recognition. Khan co-authored the book with Dr. Sam V. Bhajan. Bhajan earned an M.A. in Farsi from Punjab University and a Ph.D. in Islam from Tehran University. An expert in Islam and trained in Arabic, English, Farsi, Greek, Hindi, and Urdu, he served as Director of the Hyderababd-based Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic Studies. (Biographical details on Bhajan from Bhajan and Khan, Islām, viii.)
introduction to twentieth century Christian theologians; 1990), *Saṃvād* (a reflection on Christian dialogue with people of other faiths; 1994), and *Māno Yā Na Māno Prabhu Yīśu Ko Jāno* (a narrative account of the words and deeds of Jesus; 2003). Throughout his career, Khan remained deeply committed to the practical applications of theology and considered *Khristīy Nītiśāstr* a Christian companion to his doctoral work on Hindu ethics. And much like he did in his study of Hindu dharma, Khan begins his study of Christian ethics with a theological account of the state of and the need for ethics. To understand the logic of *Khristīy Nītiśāstr* then, it is helpful to briefly explore *The Concept of Dharma in Valmiki Ramayana* (written originally in English).}

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7. Khan, *Khristīy Nītiśāstr*, v: “After the publication of my dissertation “the concept of dharma in Valmiki Ramayana,” it was my heartfelt desire that I also write a book in Hindi on Christian ethics and from that time I have been engaged in a special study of this topic.” (Mere śodh prabandh “vālmīki rāmāyaṇ meṁ dharm kā svarūp” ke prakāśan upārānt merī yah hārdik abhilāṣā rahī ki mainī hindī meṁ khrīstīy nītiśāstr par bhī pustak likhāṁ aur us samay se hī mainī is viṣay kā viṣeṣ adhyayan kartā rahā hūṁ.)

8. For this dissertation, it is relevant to present the structure of Khan’s theological analysis of dharma as a prelude to his theological analysis of Christian ethical duties because of my proposal that his comments on the relation between Christian theology and ethics echo similar comments on the relations between Hindu theology and ethics. Further, while we have not invested in a detailed analysis of *The Concept of Dharma in Valmiki Ramayana*, it is helpful to note that Khan’s understanding of dharma in Vālmīki’s poem reveals a careful and contextual reading of the poem as one in which its various characters struggle with the need to act according to and in order to fulfill the duties incumbent on them. In Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇa, for instance, King Daśaratha must banish his son Rāma because he made a promise as King to do so to Kaikeyī, his wife, and a king is duty-bound to his word; Rāma must obey his father and, even though the first-born heir to his father’s throne, he must leave his inheritance and enter exile; Rāvanā must abduct Sītā to avenge the dishonor to his sister, as his brotherly duty demands; Rāma must rescue Sītā, as his husbandly and royal duties demand; Rāma must exile Sītā out of duty to his subjects (Sītā had spent time in the abode of another man, Rāvanā, as his captive and Rāma’s subjects doubted her purity when she returned); and Sītā, throughout the ordeal of being exiled with her husband, kept captive by Rāvanā, and exiled again by her husband, remains a faithful and dutiful wife who follows her strīsvadharma (“womanly duty”). Dharma, or “proper function, right action, or duty,” permeates the Rāmāyaṇa and is dependent on the social locations and positions in which the various characters find themselves – though narrative conflicts exist and in at least three cases (the mutilation of Śūrpaṇakhā, the slaying of Vālin, and the rejection of Sītā) Rāma’s actions are less than ideal (Scharf, *Rāmopākhyāna*, 8-15). Consider this scene from the later summary of the story of Rāma in the Mahābhārata (at 3.265.22): when Rāvanā makes advances on his captive Sītā, she reminds Rāvanā that she is the wife of another and he should refrain from such advances because he is the guardian of the quarter – and responsible for those who reside in it – and a sage’s son who is duty-bound to proper action by his high birth. (See Scharf, *Rāmopākhyāna*, 429-37)

While Khan’s reading of dharma in the Rāmāyaṇa is broadly on-point, he does not examine the rhetorical nature of the text that would seem quite relevant in light of Khan’s desire to explore the ways in which the notion of dharma functions as one of the key ethical messages of the Rāmāyaṇa. The study of dharma in Hindu literature, Gavin Flood rightly notes, is the study of “brahmanical self-representations and idealized images of gender roles” (Flood, *Hinduism*, 66) and the Rāma and Sītā of Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇa are an ideal Hindu couple. “He is honest, brave, the fulfiller of all his ethical responsibilities, and devoted to his wife, while she is modest, demure, virtuous, dedicated to her Lord and husband, yet strong in herself” (Flood, *Hinduism*, 109). Khan does not acknowledge this rhetoric and how it compares to reality (and to deviations within the text itself – for instance, when Sītā refuses to
The turn to *Khristīy Nītiśāstr* from *The Concept of Dharma*, however, was not only a move to Christian ethics from Hindu ethics but an intentional turn to writing in Hindi. As noted above, Khan desired to “write a book in Hindi” on Christian ethics. Why did he switch to Hindi when writing on Christian ethics, having written in English on Hindu ethics? Further, in which ways, if any, did the decision to write in Hindi affect the content of his Christian ethics? Before we turn to a comparative analysis of the content of *The Concept of Dharma* and *Khristīy Nītiśāstr*, then, a few notes on the choice of Hindi will help us identify the larger linguistic atmosphere within which Khan located *Khristīy Nītiśāstr* (and the other Hindi-language books that followed).

One cluster of reasons to choose Hindi was motivated by pragmatic reasons and two needs were particularly generative of the choice. First, Hindi-language B.Th. and B.D. students of the Senate of Serampore needed textbooks in Hindi and the Hindi Theological Literature Committee was given the task to prepare and publish these books. In response, the Committee launched a series of ‘education books’ and invited well-known scholars to contribute manuscripts. Both *Islām: Ek Paricay* (1974; Khan’s first Hindi-language book) and *Khristīy Nītiśāstr* (1981) sought to meet the need of Hindi-medium seminary students. Second, both books, as mentioned earlier, were first works in Hindi written primarily for Hindi Christian readers.

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9. See note 7 above.
10. H.T.L.C. “[kā] āgrah rahā ki sīrāmpur kāmlej kī bī. ṭīec. evam bī. ḍi. parīksāom ke chātroṁ ke hitārth tathā unke pāṭhykrn ke ādhār par khrīṣṭīy nītiśāstr pustak likhī jāe.” (“It [was H.T.L.C.’s] request that, for the benefit of the B.Th. and B.D. students of Serampore and on the basis of their syllabus, a book on Christian ethics be written) [Khan, *Khristīy Nītiśāstr*, vi]. Similarly, in *Islām: Ek Paricay* Bhajan and Khan write (vi): *[Yah] pustak sīrāmpur sinet ke bī. ṭīec. evam bī. ḍi. ke chātroṁ kī āvaśyakātāom kī pārti hetu bhib likhī gāi hai.* (“[This] book has also been written to meet the needs of the B.Th. and B.D. students of Serampore Senate.”)
The practical needs of Christian theological education, however, were not the only rationale for choosing Hindi. Both the publisher (H.T.L.C.) and the author (Khan) were conscious of the fact that such books would serve two additional purposes. First, they would be accessible to the nation’s vast Hindi-speaking population. As Bhajan and Khan write in their introduction to *Islām: Ek Paricay*, “It is our belief that our humble attempt will be valuable and a mile-post for all Hindi-language readers and seekers of truth.”¹¹ Second, the contents of these books, in their pan-Hindi and extra-Christian reach, would hopefully bring about change in society-at-large beyond the mere sharing of knowledge regarding their respective topics. In his foreword to *Islām*, for instance, David hopes the book will “encourage seekers of truth” and “promote mutual dialogue and national unity.”¹² Similarly, in his preface to *Khristīy Nītiśāstr*, Khan hopes his book would help his readers (both students and others) to develop character.¹³ Khan’s commitment to interfaith relations *Islām* and *Khristīy Nītiśāstr*, as explored below, should then, I would propose, be understood in light of his hope that writing in Hindi would reach a pan-Christian audience, shape society-at-large, and place Christian ideas and values in dialogue with those held by people of other faiths. I turn to these topics now.

In *The Concept of Dharma* we find a strong connection between theology and ethics. A person’s dharma, Khan explains, is deeply tied to both a person’s sense of her theological station in life and to her sense of her commensurate ethical duties. “Dharm is relative” and “different for

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¹³. Though, to note, *Khristīy Nītiśāstr* is aimed at a less religiouslyplural readership than *Islām* and Khan directs his hope to the development of Christian character in those beyond his student readers.
people at the several stages of development.” It is for Valmiki, Khan explains, “subject to time” and “a dynamic pragmatic principle operating in human situations and limited by human situations.” These stations in life, in turn, reflect the different levels of maturity or natural states in which a person finds herself. A person, then, is responsible for her actions, but proper actions are themselves a corollary of station in life. Knowledge of one’s station in life (a theological task) creates the conditions for the possibility of commensurate and corresponding actions (dharma).

When turning to the task of Christian ethics 16 years later in Khristīy Nītiśāstr, Khan seems to borrow ideas from The Concept of Dharma and begins Khristīy Nītiśāstr with an examination of the place of theology in ethical discourse. Ethics cannot be separated from the task of theology, he finds, in the context of Christian discourse because Christian ethics – or the ability to and then to actually do what is good and in the footsteps of Christ – are made possible only because of reconciliation with God in Christ. God’s reconciling of humanity in Christ, Khan argues, constitutes the source of energy for an ethical life.

[A]n unbreakable bond exists between Christian religion and ethics, Christian theology and ethics and Christian faith and ethics…. [In Christianity] the primary principle is the reconciliation of a sinful human with God and this is possible by accepting the sacrifice of Christ. A human’s true faith does not depend on her efforts, support, or religious works but on whether or not she had the experience of meeting (Reconciliation) with God. A person cannot become religious

14. “To a religious man,” he continues, “Dharma means the precepts found in the Vedas, and a strict adherence to them. To an ethical man, it is the voice of inner conscience that helps him distinguish between what is good and what is to be avoided. To a man on the street, it means customs and traditions. To a scribe it means law, secular or political, and to a philosopher, it means a metaphysical principle that binds and holds everything that sustains and nourishes, that principle of a thing in virtue of which it is what it is.” (Khan, The Concept of Dharma, 40)


16. And Khan earlier describes “religious” as “the attitude and behavior that is necessary for the world or community; that virtuous conduct through which a community is protected and peace grows and through which one obtains swiftness in heaven. (Khan, The Concept of Dharma, v: vah vṛtti yā ācaraṇ jo lok yā samāj kī sthiti ke lie
through her strength and efforts. This only generates pride in her. Having submitted before God, and having received strength [from God], a sinner can do ethical work. It is from this experience that in her life, her work and her relationships, a new change appears and she starts to live an ethical life. For this reason Christian faith and Christian ethics are not separate but are undivided [or, single, being only one] and this is also true that in Christian faith we do not meet God by living an ethical life but having met God receive the strength [or, ability] to live an ethical life. In light of this presupposition, I am making a small attempt to write a book on Christian ethics.  

Theology and ethics are, for Khan, inseparable in the Christian context. They share an “aṭūṭ sambandh” (an “unbreakable bond,” as I have translated above). Christian ethics is not “separate” (“prthak”) from Christian faith. Rather, Christian faith and Christian ethics are “undivided” (“anany”) aspects of Christian reflection because there can be no ethics without one’s experience of God and to experience God is to gain the ability, and hence the responsibility, to live ethically.  

A few observations can be made on Khan’s theology of Christian ethics. First, Khan’s Christian ethics do not represent a contrast to ethical ideas in other faith traditions. Given their inter-faith context, rather, his writings reveal some of the ways in which interfaith relations and Christian witness in multifaith contexts have shaped Christian theological thought. As we have discussed above, Khan identifies his work as a comparative study to an earlier work on Hindu ethics.
Ethical questions can find their “right answers” in the larger field of theological reflections that includes sources from other faiths. He writes,

Religion calls God sat, cit, ānand. Some learned folks say satyam-śivam-sundaram. If this definition is accurate then it proves the unbreakable relation between ethic and religion, because the good (śivam, Good) that ethics studies, that is a property of God. Then we also know that we cannot give any correct answers to ethical questions till we do not discern what is the nature of a human, what is her place in the universe, and what is the nature of the universe. Therefore we reach this conclusion that from a logical and practical perspective there is a strong relationship between religion and ethics.

Second, Khan’s ethical project is part of a larger commitment to learning from and about other faith traditions in ways that further harmony and dialogue. When read together, Khan’s Khristīy Nītiśāstr and The Concept of Dharma in Valmiki Ramayana offer an opportunity to engage in an interfaith dialogue that invites one to learn from other faith traditions in ways that affect an understanding of one’s own faith tradition. Khan himself has not produced any work in this form of comparative reflection and so cannot be called a comparative theologian in that mode. Yet, Khristīy Nītiśāstr also reveals Khan’s invitation to learn from ideas and practices in other faith traditions.

The call to interfaith learning in Khristīy Nītiśāstr is noteworthy in light of the text’s enduring influence and popularity. Khristīy Nītiśāstr was written as the primary instructional text on Christian ethics for Hindi-medium B.D. and B.Th. students of the Senate of Serampore. Since the Senate served as (and remains) the primary agency to accredit and set the standards of Christian theological education in India, Khristīy Nītiśāstr functioned (and still functions) as one

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18. The feminine possessive is my addition; the original possessive (uskā) is gender non-specific.
19. Khan, Khristīy Nītiśāstr, 18: Dharma īśvar ko sat cit ānand kahtā hai. Kucch vidvān satyam-śivam-sundaram kahte haiṁ. Yadi yah paribhāṣā saty hai to nītiśāstr aur dharm mein aṭūt sambandh pramāṇit hotā hai, kyoṁki jis śubh (śivam, Good) kā naitik śāstr adhyayan kartā hai, vah dharm ke īśvar kā gun hai. Fir hum yah bhī jānte haiṁ ki hum naitik praśnoṁ kā us vakt tak koṁ saṁ hiti uttar nahiṁ de sakte jab tak hum is bāt ko niścit na kar leṁ ki manusy kī prakṛti kyā hai, brahmānḍ meṁ uskā kyā sthān hai, aur brahmānḍ kā kyā svarūp hai. Ataḥ hum is niśkarṣ par pahuṁcte hai kī tārkī evam vyāvāhārik rūp se dharm aur nītiśāstr mein ghanīśth sambandh hai.
of the ‘standard texts’ for Hindi-speaking seminarians and pastors. Its popularity, however, exceeded seminaries and the text has also established itself as a key source on Christian ethics among church leaders, congregants, and other readers.\textsuperscript{20}

But \textit{Khristīy Nītiśāstr} does not merely model a type of cross-faith learning. It also proposes a larger purpose to interfaith learning. Cross-faith ethical learning seeks to better society.

Introducing his work, Khan first explains: “ethics is the common science to study what is good and bad in human character. Through its study we learn of human values and we also learn of what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior, of what is good and bad, in business, health, and in relations with each other.”\textsuperscript{21} But, reflections on ethics in pluralist contexts invite attention to goals beyond the study of right and wrong: they also seek to improve interfaith dialogue and harmony among people of different faiths. In his introduction to \textit{Islām}, Khan then further writes:

\begin{quote}
Nowadays there is a new movement afoot even among Christians whose goal is to establish a loving relationship between believers of the various religions in the world. It is needed that adherents of different religions lovingly sit with each other to listen to each other and search for the ultimate truth together. Such a truth that fills the heart with that peace that gives rise to a new-human and that is full of love and hope. This new movement is called dialogue (Dialogue).\textsuperscript{22} This does not mean that we cast dirt on each other, but that we sit in a loving environment and with patience and peace listen to and understand each other with compassion, learn from each other, and to the extent possible help each other for the betterment of society. To make this movement successful it is important that we are richly introduced to the beliefs and practices of other religions. For
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{20} See, for instance, C. W. David’s editorial preface in \textit{Khristīy Nītiśāstr}, ix.

\textsuperscript{21} Khan, \textit{Khristīy Nītiśāstr}, 30: nītiśāstr manuṣy ke vyavāhār meṁ śubh aur aśubh ke adhyayan kā sāmān vyāhār vijñān hai. Iske adhyayan se hameṁ mānāvīy mālyōṁ kā gyān hotā hai aur hum yah bhi jānte hain ki vyāpār meṁ, cikitsā meṁ, āpsī sambandhoṁ meṁ kaun sā vyavāhār ucit hai aur kaunsā anucit hai; kyā śubh aur kyā aśubh hai.

\textsuperscript{22} It is relevant to note that \textit{saṁvād} as used by Khan, Dayal, and other Hindi Christian authors takes on a positive tone to express conversations and dialogue that build relationships. \textit{Saṁvād}’s root verb, \textit{vād}, is usually understood as speaking, speech, or (in another popular use) a dispute or controversy, especially in the form \textit{vād-vivād} (McGregor, \textit{The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary}, 913). \textit{Saṁvād} does not necessarily imply a positive tone and can function as a reference, in a limited way, to ‘speech together’ (\textit{saṁ vād}), discussions, debate, or dialogue (McGregor, \textit{The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary}, 967). As used in Hindi Christian literature, however, \textit{saṁvād} predominantly functions as a reference to ‘positive’ dialogue (generally), and to interfaith dialogue more specifically in the context of Khan’s works.
this reason, those books that present the beliefs, rituals, and ethics of different faiths in a proper way will certainly meet a big need of the times.  

Written at a time when interfaith dialogue had become well-established as a top priority of the global, Asian, and national ecumenical movements, Khan’s commentary reflected the interest of Hindi Christian authors to popularize that movement among Hindi Christians and to help contribute to it. Khan’s observations, then, are better understood as an acknowledgment of larger currents within the wider Christian family.

Finally, where interfaith learning became an invaluable resource and interfaith relations an important goal, ethics as the study of desirable (good) values and actions became for Khan the vehicle to present Christian witness as a social message in a multifaith context. The clearest expression of the link between social goals – harmony and dialogue – and Christian ethics is found in two places in Khan’s corpus: his creative engagement of Bonhoeffer’s Ethics in Khristīy Nītiśāstr (1981) and the summation of his life-long study of interfaith relations in his book on

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23. Khan, Islām, v: Āj kal māsīhiyoiṁ men bhī ek nāyā āndolan cal rāḥā hai jis kā lakṣy sansār ke vibhinn dharmoin ke mānne vāloṁ ke madhy preṁ kā sambandh sthāpit karnā hai. Āvaśyākātā ā is bāt kī hai ki vibhinn dharmoin ke mānne vāle āpas men prem pṛṣārn bāth kar ek dūsre kī bāt suneṁ aur mil jul kar paramaṁtā kī khoj kareṁ. Aisā saty jo hṛday meṁ us sāntī ko bhar de jis se ek nav-mānāv kā uday ho aur jo prem aur āśā se paripūṛn ho. Is naye āndolan kā nāṁ samvād (Dialogue) hai. Is kā matlaḥ yah nahūṁ ki hum ek dūsre par kīcād uchhālem, varan yah hai ki hum premāmāy vāthāvan men bāth kar dhairy aur sāntī se ek dūsre kī bāt sahāṇubhūti se suneṁ aur samjheṁ, ek dūsre se sākheṁ aur jahān tak bān pade jantā kī bhālāī ke liye ek dūsre kī sahaṁtā kareṁ. Is āndolan ko safāl bānāne ke liye yah āvaśyāk hai ki hum dūsre dharmoin ke viśvāsōṁ aur rīti rivājoṁ se bhalī bhāṁtī paricāy prāpt kareṁ. Is lie aisā pustaken, jo vibhinn dharmoin ke viśvāsōṁ, rasmorivājom, naitikātā ādi ko ucīt dhāng se prastut kareṁ, āvaśy hi samay kī ek bādī āvaśyākātā ko pūrā kareṁgī.

24. Drawing from debates reflected in Acts 15, Galatians 2, and 1 Corinthians 7:12-16, the National Council of Churches in India adopted interfaith relations as a top priority from its earliest days as the Protestant Missionary Council (1914); the Christian Conference of Asia had done so at its founding in 1957; and, the World Council of Churches (W.C.C.) created its Sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies in 1971 (W.C.C.’s history with interfaith dialogue must be traced back to the issue’s important place at the 1910 (Edinburgh) missionary conference, which is generally considered the genesis of the global ecumenical movement, heated debates at the 1928 (Jerusalem) and 1938 (Tambaran) missionary conferences, Paul Devanandan’s address to the W.C.C. Assembly in New Delhi (1961), the first multifaith dialogue convened by W.C.C. in 1970 (Lebanon), and the vote of the W.C.C. Central Committee in Addis Ababa to establish the Sub-unit dedicated to interfaith dialogue.) See Lossky, et al., Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, 311-317.

Bonhoeffer’s “religionless Christianity,” which Khan translates as an instance of “secular theology,” was an idea in response to the perception that God was being increasingly displaced as the foundation in key social discourses. Stated positively, the world was gaining greater “autonomy” from theology, which, Bonhoeffer observed, did not set conversations in society anymore. In theology, “reason is sufficient for religious knowledge.” In ethics, “rules of life” have substituted the commandments. Politics have been “detached” from morality and built on ‘reasons of the state.’ Natural law has become the basis for law. Philosophers have provided alternatives in deism and pantheism. Natural sciences and physics have replaced the finite created world with an infinite self sustaining one.\(^{25}\) As Bonhoeffer put it in July 1944, the current state of divine affairs could be summarized as the attempt to speak of God *etsi deus non dare tur* (“even if there were no God”).\(^ {26}\)

The world had “come of age.”\(^ {27}\) It was “conscious of itself and [of] the laws that govern its own existence” and had “grown self-confident.”\(^ {28}\) During such a time, the challenge of the church was to speak of God in a world where God is not needed. Religionless Christianity provided a way ahead: the power of God in the world now diminished (in some discourses unnecessary), the church could invite people to look at the powerless and suffering God at the heart of the Bible. To the extent it points to the redeeming, incarnated, and this worldly Word,

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we may say that the development towards the world’s coming of age outlined above, which has done away with a false conception of God, opens up a way of seeing the God of the Bible, who wins power and space in the world by his weakness. This will probably be the starting-point of our ‘secular interpretation’.”

For Bonhoeffer, religionless Christianity was a call to rediscover the incarnate Word. It was also, in a very politically relevant way, a call to turn to the world and meet it in its particular needs and situations. A concrete, incarnated Christ existed at the heart of Christianity and, consequently, Christianity in an increasingly mature world had the renewed opportunity to (re)introduce Christ to the new world. “In Christ the reality of God meets the reality of the world and allows us to share in this real encounter…. Christian life is participation in the encounter of Christ with the world.” A real encounter happens in the concrete situations in which a Christian finds herself.

For Bonhoeffer, two aspects of Christian ethics are important: its concrete presence in a mature world, and its service as a worldly (penultimate) signpost to Christ. Not only are Christian ethics properly considered as lived ethics, they must also, crucially, be understood as “the penultimate in Christian life” that point toward and prepare the way for a person’s encounter with Christ. Christ is the ultimate to which Christian ethics point and Christ is the ultimate from which the penultimate draws its foundation, form, and content. Khan is a careful reader of Bonhoeffer and accurately identifies the Christology and worldliness that undergirds Bonhoeffer’s Christian ethics. The worldliness of Bonhoeffer’s ethics plays no small part in Khan’s use of Bonhoeffer in

30. Bonhoeffer, Ethics, 132 (emphasis added).
the Hindi Christian context. As I will later show, however, Khan adapts Bonhoeffer’s arguments on the role of Christian theology and ethics in the public realm by placing them in service of political engagement and building interfaith relations.

Khan finds Bonhoeffer particularly insightful because, in Bonhoeffer, Khan found a Western counterpart who asserted the worldliness of the church as a reminder of the lived nature of Christian ethics. As a result, in his work Khan chose to highlight those sections of Bonhoeffer’s *Ethics* where Bonhoeffer argues against the separation of the space of the church from that of the world (i.e., theological claims of “two spheres”) and argues for the recognition of true humanity in the fulfillment of God’s call to lived ethics in particular contexts – Khan wants the church to be active in the world and assert its lived nature and he wants Christian ethics to serve a larger purpose.

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32. Bonhoeffer’s *Ethics* receive substantial treatment in *Khristīy Nītiśāstr* (pp. 159-62; 1981) and Bonhoeffer’s *Ethics* and *Letters and Papers from Prison* receive sustained attention in *Bīsăvīṃ Śatābdī ke Pramukh Dharmāvijñānī* (pp. 145-63; 1990).

Bonhoeffer is not the only author Khan studies. In *Khristīy Nītiśāstr*, Khan also engages the ethical writings of, among others, Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, John Calvin, Martin Luther, Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul of Tarsus, H. H. Titus, and Joseph Vadakumcherry. *Bīsăvīṃ Śatābdī ke Pramukh Dharmāvijñānī* examines the theological writings of Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Adolf Harnack, John MacQuarrie, Ved Mehta, “the Niebuhr brothers” (*nībur bandhu*), Karl Rahner, David F. Strauss, Paul Tillich, A. N. Whitehead, and, as mentioned above, includes a large section on Dietrich Bonhoeffer. (Khan does not assume these authors are known to his readers. Rather, keeping in line with the introductory nature and goal of *Khristīy Nītiśāstr*, he introduces them and their main proposals to his readers.)

33. Bonhoeffer was no stranger to interfaith relations and devoted substantial attention to the relation of the church to the Jews. Amidst an avalanche of anti-Jewish laws and restrictions, Bonhoeffer went farther than many of his fellow Christian leaders to declare that the church had an “unconditional obligation” to support and serve anyone who was a victim of state ordering whether they happened to be baptized or not in a clear reference to church obligations to protect the Jews from state persecution. By the spring of 1933, Metaxas reports, “Bonhoeffer was declaring it the duty of the church to stand up for the Jews.” (Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer*, 155). For a succinct description of Bonhoeffer on the church and its relation to Jews, see Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer*, chapter 10.

34. As I discuss below, Khan does not embrace Bonhoeffer’s sense of a world ‘without God.’ For Bonhoeffer that meant the receding of God from public life. For Khan, however, God is not absent from the world; the challenge, rather, is to speak, in a public way of the God in whom Christians believe in light of the theological claims of people of many other (and more dominant) faith traditions.
In *Khristīy Nītiśāstr* (1981), Khan turns his attention to Bonhoeffer’s views on the doctrine of “two spheres” that distinguishes between the “divine, holy, supernatural and Christian” and the “worldly, profane, natural, and un-Christian.”  

Paraphrasing Bonhoeffer, Khan writes,

In his book ‘Ethics,’ Bonhoeffer, having accepted the commentary of Luther against the dualist [way of thinking] (Thinking in Term of Two Spheres), strongly critiques the natural and un-natural levels [or, spheres] of a human…. According to this dualism, ethics was also divided into two spheres…rules [or, laws] for those who are in the sphere of the natural and spiritual perfection for those who are religious, those who have decided to live a Christian life….

Bonhoeffer calls this dualism unrealistic and writes: “A Christian, having accepted Christ, does not become the location of any duality but just as Christ is one, [she] too, having been liberated from dualities, becomes an undivided unity and does not live in two spheres [but] always in one sphere.”

Bonhoeffer writes that we should not consider this natural life as a life that is prior to accepting Christ but as a life that receives meaning through Jesus Christ.

In summary we can say that Bonhoeffer gave new meaning and new value to the worldly life by stressing on the penultimate [or, on its penultimate nature]. In the same way, having demolished the two spheres or dualism, he proved that this world does not hinder

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36. Bonhoeffer uses “supernatural” (e.g., *Ethics*, 193ff ) to refer to the divine, holy, and spiritual in contrast to the worldly and Khan uses aprākṛtik (which is normally translated as “unnatural” or “not having to do with nature” [see McGregor, *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*, 44]) to translate “supernatural.” Aprākṛtik, however, especially when translated back into English as “unnatural,” does not sufficiently capture Bonhoeffer’s basic thesis. Bonhoeffer does not present natural and supernatural as oppositional states couched in a faulty “two-sphere” way of organizing reality; using “unnatural,” however, suggests a certain sense of mutual exclusiveness and oppositional relation (‘a’ functions as a negating prefix before prākṛtik in aprākṛtik) that is absent in Bonhoeffer’s analysis. Further, Bonhoeffer’s corrective to dualist thinking is a reaffirmation of the very this-worldly and human incarnation of the divine Word; the natural and supernatural cannot be sustained as exclusive categories in light of Christology. “The world, the natural, the profane and reason are now all taken up into God from the outset.” Even further, “they do not exist ‘in themselves’ and ‘on their own account’,” but rather in Christ. (Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 196) This interplay between the supernatural and natural is lost when the unnatural and natural are taken as the points of discussion. I believe a better Hindi translation would be alaukik, which is properly translated as “supernatural” or “transcendental” (see, McGregor, *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*, 60 and Bulcke, *Aṁgrezī-Hindī Koś*, 835).
37. Khan, it seems, is paraphrasing rather than directly quoting from Bonhoeffer’s *Ethics*. The source passage is, most probably, found on p. 198 of *Ethics*: “Whoever professes to believe in the reality of Jesus Christ, as the revelation of God, must in the same breath profess his faith in both the reality of God and the Reality of the world; for in Christ he finds God and the world reconciled. And for just this reason the Christian is no longer the man of eternal conflict, but, just as the reality in Christ is one, so he, too, since he shares in this reality in Christ, is himself an undivided whole. His worldliness does not divide him from Christ, and his Christianity does not divide him from the world. Belonging wholly to Christ, he stands at the same time wholly in the world.” Conspicuously, Bonhoeffer describes the unity of the natural and supernatural in a Christian; Khan seems to merge the former with the latter within the one natural sphere [or level] in Christ. While the union in Christ is stated using different metaphors, the evidence suggests that on this point Khan intends to echo Bonhoeffer rather than to adapt or disagree with him.
one from accepting Christ but provides assistance in doing so.\textsuperscript{38} A Christian should know
that a Christian is a human and that particular human is human who has accepted the
incarnated Christ.\textsuperscript{39}

Since Christ is the sign to true humanity, Christian ethics takes its cues from the life of Christ,
the true human in whom humanity finds its truth and fulfillment and towards whom the
(penultimate) Christian ethical life points. Further, just as a Christian takes her cues from the life
of Christ, so too the church, as a community of disciples, is called to take its ethical cues from
Christ and to live in the world as the penultimate signpost to Christ. Khan explains,

\begin{quote}
Christ is an example for human life. What he did, how he lived, how was his life; he lived
among humans, he ate and drank with them, would sleep and rise up like them and would
awaken a new humanity in them. This should be the ethical life of a Christian. Not far
from the world but amidst the world, and this also should be the task of the church.\textsuperscript{40}
\end{quote}

Echoing Bonhoeffer on the lived and active space that the church occupies in the world as a
witness to Christ,\textsuperscript{41} Khan continues,

\begin{quote}
38. In Bonhoeffer’s words: “Ethical thinking in terms of spheres, then, is invalidated by faith in the
revelation of the ultimate reality in Jesus Christ, and this means there is no real possibility of being a Christian
outside the reality of the world and that there is no real worldly existence outside the reality of Jesus Christ. There is
no place to which the Christian can withdraw from the world, whether it be outwardly or in the sphere of the inner
life.” (Bonhoeffer, \textit{Ethics}, 198)

lāthar ne dvaītāvād (Thinking in Terms of Two Spheres) ke virudh kī thī, svīkār kartā huā manusy ke prākṛtik evam
aprākṛtik staroṁ ki ghor ālocānā kartā hai. … Is dvaītāvād ke anūṣār naitikātā ke bhī do star māne jāne lage…niyam, un logoṁ ke lie jo ki prākṛtik star par rahe haiṁ aur ādhyātmik pūrṇātā un logoṁ ke lie jo dharmī
haiṁ, jinhoṁne masīhī jīvan vyasī karne kā niścay kar liyā hai. …
Bāmnāhūfar is dvaītāvād ko avāstāvīk kahtā huā likhtā hai: “Ek masīhī, masīh ko svīkār karne ke paścāt
kiṁ antardvand kā kṣetr nahiṁ ban jāā parantu jis prakār masīh ek hai vah bhī antardvand se mukti pā pē ek avibhājīt
ikāī ban jāā hai aur vah do staroṁ par nahiṁ rahtā, sadaiv ek star par rahtā hai.”…

Bāmnāhūfar likhtā hai ki is prākṛtik jīvan ko hum yah na mān baithēijn ki yah masīh ko svīkār karne se
pahle kā jīvan hai parantu yah jīvan to vah hai jo masīh yīśu dvārā mānyatā prāpt hai.

Sārāṁś meṁ hum kah sakte haiṁ ki bāmnāhūfar ne upāntīm par jor dekar is duniyāvī jīvan ko nayā arth
pradhān kīyā aur nā mahattvātā vah. Iśī prakār do staroṁ anūṣār dvaītāvād ko dhāh kar yah pramāṇīt kīyā ki yah
jagata masīhī ko is duniyā kā prabhū mānne meṁ avārodh utpann nahiṁ kartā varan sahāyātā detā hai. Ek masīhī ko
yah jānnā cāhī ki ek masīhī manusy hai aur vahī manusy, manusy hai jisne ki dehādhārī masīh ko svīkār kīyā hai.

40. Khan, \textit{Khristīy Nītiśāstr}, 162: Masīh mānav jīvan ko lie ek udāharaṇ hai. Usne kyā kīyā, kaise rahā, kyā
uskā jīvan thā; vah manusyō me rahāthā thā, unke satīh khaṭā-pīṭhā thā, unki bhānītī sotā-ūṭhā thā aur unme ek nāi
mānavātā ko jograt kartā thā. Yahī ek masīhī kā naītik jīvan honā cāhī. Jagat se dūr nahiṁ varan jagat ke madhy
aur yahī care kā kāry bhī honā cāhīe.

41. Bonhoeffer, \textit{Ethics}, 199-200: “The Church does indeed occupy a definite space in the world…. It would
be very dangerous to overlook this, to deny the visible nature of the Church, and to reduce her to the status of a
The Church has a place in this world. The Church is a part of this world. The Church has a responsibility toward this world, [and] for this reason the Church is a community that is responsible to the world. It has to leap into this world, that does not believe in God. It cannot do anything by being far away from it.\footnote{Khan, \textit{Khristīy Nītiśāstr}, 162: \textit{Carc kā is jagat mein ek sthān hai. Carc kā is jagat ke prati ek uttardāyitv hai, islie carc ek vah samāj hai jiskā uttardāyitv jagat ke prati hai. Use is sansār mein kūd jānā hai, jo īśvar ko nahīṁ māntā. Vah usse dūr rahkar koī kāry nahīṁ kar saktā.}}

Where Bonhoeffer speaks to a world increasingly without the need for God, Khan’s reference to a world that “does not believe in God” should be understood as a reference to a context where people do not believe in God as understood by Christians rather than as a comment on the decreasing presence or absence of God in public discourses. This is because it is not Khan’s purpose in \textit{Khristīy Nītiśāstr} to argue (unlike Bonhoeffer) for the diminishing influence or absence of God in (Khan’s) world. On the contrary, as discussed below, the substantial influence of religion in public life in India features prominently in \textit{Khristīy Nītiśāstr} as the context within which an Indian Christian is called to witness Christ and build interfaith relations. Despite these differences, Khan finds Bonhoeffer most appealing in the latter’s insistence on the this-worldliness of Christian ethics and theology, a point Khan reiterates in his second engagement of Bonhoeffer in \textit{Bīsāvīṁ Śatābdī ke Pramukh Dharmāvīgyānī} (“leading theologians of the twentieth century”; 1990), published nine years after \textit{Khristīy Nītiśāstr}. 

\footnote{purely spiritual force. For this would be to render ineffective the fact of the revelation of God in the world, and to transform Christ Himself into a spirit… the Church of Jesus Christ is the place, in other words the space in the world, at which the reign of Jesus Christ over the whole world is evidenced and proclaimed. This space of the Church, then, is not something which exists on its own account. It is from the outset something which reaches out far beyond itself, for indeed it is not the space of some kind of cultural association such as would have to fight for its own survival in the world, but it is the place where testimony is given to the foundation of all reality in Jesus Christ.”}
In *Bīsāvīṁ Śatābdī ke Pramukh Dharmāvijñānī*, Khan is more direct in his insistence that the church is called to witness in the world and not away from it. Quoting Bonhoeffer directly,\(^43\) Khan explains:

“Through ideals, programs, conscience, duty, responsibility and virtue we cannot face power nor can we overcome it. We can do this work through the love of God, through such a love that is not a general idea but is complete love.”\(^44\)

Further,

Bonhoeffer describes this love as love of God in Christ, and calls it ‘living in the love of God’.\(^45\)

Finally, this lived love, or the love of a God who lived in the world in Jesus,

does not inspire a human to flee the world but rather empowers her to deal with all the troubles of the world, just as the body of Jesus Christ dealt with the fury of sin. It is also important for the Church that it put itself in harm’s way for the sake of the world. A Christian, even while being in Christ is [still] based in the world.\(^46\)

In Bonhoeffer’s ethical writings and his letters and notes from prison, Khan finds a clear call for every follower of Christ and the church as the body of believers to take the world seriously and find place in it to preach the good news of presence rather than of absence. Khan writes,

\(^43\) The source passage reads: “It is not by ideals and programmes or by conscience, duty, responsibility and virtue that reality can be confronted and overcome, but simply and solely by the perfect love of God.” (Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 72)

\(^44\) Khan, *Bīsāvīṁ Śatābdī ke Pramukh Dharmāvijñānī*, 146: Ādārśoṁ, kāryākroṁ, antarātmā, kartavy, uttardāyitv aur sadgun dvārā hum sattā kā na to sāṁnā kar sakte haim aur na āh us par vijay pā sakte hain. Yah kāry hum īśvar se prem ke dvārā, aise prem ke dvārā, jo ek sāmāny pratay nahiṁ parantu sampūrṇ prem hai, kar sakte hain.

\(^45\) Khan, *Bīsāvīṁ Śatābdī ke Pramukh Dharmāvijñānī*, 146: Is prem ko bāṁnāhūfar masīh men īśvar se prem kī sagyā detā hai, aur use vah īśvar se prem mein jīnā kahtā hai.

\(^46\) Khan, *Bīsāvīṁ Śatābdī ke Pramukh Dharmāvijñānī*, 146: [Yah prem] manusy ko sansār se bhāgne kī prerāṇā nahiṁ detā parantu is bāt kī kṣamātā pradān kartā hai ki vah sansā kī sab vipattiymo ko jhele, jaise yīśu-masīh kī deh ne pāp ke krodh ko sahan kiyā. Care ke liye bhi yah jārūrī hai ki vah sansār ke liye apko āpko jokhim mein ḍāle. Ek masīhī, masīh mein hotā huā bhi sansār mein sthit hai.
Bonhoeffer … tells us that we must take this world very seriously. [We must] love it, live in it, and if needed even die for it. Our good news does not establish any escapist religion.\(^{47}\)

Stated differently, Khan considers the call to a radical attention to the needs of the world Bonhoeffer’s chief contribution to theology and ecclesiology.

[Secular] theology certainly taught the church a new lesson. It was that the church give its full [and] active contribution to [address] the challenges and problems of the world. Just as the God of the Old Testament is fully involved in the spiritual, social and material aspects of the Israelites, in the same we need today such a God who provides spiritual and material support to all humanity in the world.\(^{48}\)

Khan’s theology, like Bonhoeffer’s, asserts an active God present in the world in Christ and consequently Khan’s ethical writings call on Christians to be present and active in the world.

Yet, Khan and Bonhoeffer differ in revealing ways in how the church is called to be present and active in the world. Bonhoeffer properly relocates Christian discipleship and ethics within the world yet stops short of calling on the church to be shaped by the world. Khan, on the other hand, calls for Christian theology and ethics to be shaped by people of other faiths and invites Christians to place their lived ethics in service of interfaith relations. Dialogue, in this schema, becomes the primary expression of Christian service, and given the (particular) multifaith context within which Khan writes, interfaith relations emerge as special goals of a Christian theo-ethics.

\(^{47}\) Khan, बीसवीं सताब्दी के प्रमुख धर्मविज्ञानी, 147: बांसनाहुःफर … हमें बताता है कि हमें इस संसार को बड़ी संजीवता से लेना चाहिए। इस प्यार करना, इसी में रहना चाहिए और यदि जरूरी हो तो इसके लिये मरना भी चाहिए। हमारा सुमाचार किस पलायनवादी धर्म की स्थापना नहीं करता।

\(^{48}\) Khan, बीसवीं सताब्दी के प्रमुख धर्मविज्ञानी, 162: [धर्मनिरपेक्षावादी] धर्मविज्ञान ने कर्को निष्ठूल रूप से एक नया पाथ पढ़ाया। वह यह है कि कर्क मानुष्यों की सांसारिक काथनायों और सामाजिक सहायता में मिल पुराना सक्रिय योगदान दे। जिस प्रकार पुराना नियम का इस्वर इस्राएल काँट में आध्यात्मिक, सामाजिक और भाविक पहलुओं को बराबर चित्रा है इस प्रकार अजी इस्वर का, जो इस सांसार में समस्त मानव-जाति का आध्यात्मिक और भाविक सहायता करे, अवायवक्ता है।
The groundwork for such a project was laid in Khan’s first Hindi Christian publication, his introduction to Islam (Islām: Ek Paricay) in 1974. In that book Khan squarely placed his project of educating his readers – and it is important to recall that Islām was written for Hindi-speaking Christian seminarians, pastors, and lay-readers – about Islam in order to promote interfaith relations. As C. W. David, the editor of H.T.L.C. when it published Islām, wrote in his remarks on the 1974 first edition (original emphasis):

Islam is one of the main religions of the world. The number of followers of Islam currently in India is second to that of the majority Hindu believers. A majority of them lives in Hindi-speaking areas. According to the 1971 census, 45.3 crore are followers of the Hindu religion, 6.1 crore Muslim, 1.4 crore Christian, 1 crore Sikh, 38 lakhs Buddhist and 20 lakhs Jain. These numbers are presented here not to divide (literally, “separate”) the nation but to explain the importance of the fact that in our nation there are different religious beliefs and religious ethics and that we should study each other, and even knowing that all religions are not the same we should respect the feelings of each other.

There are three goals behind preparing Islām Ek Paricay out of which the authors have mentioned two also in their foreword: first, to assist with mutual dialogue (Dialogue); second, to meet the needs of B.Th. and B.D. students of the Serampore Senate; third, so that our nation, and especially Hindi-speakers, learn that even though religions are not similar, may the national and ethical life flourish in our nation and specially in Hindi-speaking regions.

Khan returns to this theme of interfaith relations in Khristīy Nītiśāstr and Saṃvād. So, what is the way to interfaith relations in Khan’s ethics? First, Christian love for neighbor should extend to
non-Christian neighbors without the need to preach and propagate the faith. Second, given the social conditions in which an Indian Christian finds herself – i.e., living as a member of a religious minority in a democratic nation – Christian ethics must include robust participation in governance of communities to ensure that Christian values are brought to bear on politics and social policies. Finally, interfaith learning should be part of Christian discipleship in India.

First, Khan asks Christians to love their neighbors in their brokenness and complexity and not reduce them to what they do, how they live, whether they are religious or religious in the proper way, or their social standing. He explains:

The second aspect of Christ’s love rule is to love the neighbor. The neighbor is not some disembodied idea but a real truth. Christ did not command you to love humankind or humanity. That is why the topic of love is the neighbor. Who is my neighbor? Answering this question Christ offered a beautiful parable to present all the facets of a neighbor. We live in a world of formal relationships. We try [to find] what is this other person? In other words, what does this person do? ... How many children does this person have? How is this person living her life? How happy or sad is this man? Is someone ill in her house? Etc. our introduction remains a surface introduction, i.e., what does he do? And we build a relationship on that basis. It is a matter of misfortune that we attempt to learn only one aspect (dimension) of her.

In similar fashion, Khan suggests, we lose focus on the ‘whole’ neighbor when we exert our religious pride and “legalistic morality” against them for being improperly religious or irreligious:

54. The first and primary aspect, for a Christian, is to love God.
Some people take pride in their knowledge, wealth, physical beauty, race, etc. and this pride erects walls between human relationships. They prevent us from seeing the needs of our neighbors. Casteism in India and racism in some western countries are examples of these. Christ calls our attention to another form of pride that was eating through the ethical and religious arrangements of his time like a termite. This was religious pride, or pride in being spiritual. [This religious pride] was hurt when they saw Jesus mingle with common people; drink and eat with them, and even touch them. … In the command to ‘love your neighbor’ Christ debunked all this legalistic morality [of the religiously proud] and, sitting with the poor and the sinners, demolished the wall that legalistic morality puts up between the religious and the unreligious.⁵⁶

Loving one’s neighbor involves turning to non-Christian neighbors. This is especially so because Christians in India find themselves in a religion-rich nation. He writes,

We Christians who live in India must be especially aware that even though India is a secular country nevertheless secularism does not imply the lack of religion [or, an irreligious nation]. Every person has the freedom to profess and propagate her own faith and has been commanded⁵⁷ to respect another’s faith.

Even though India is a secular state, Khan explains, India is not “a-religious” (a-dharm[ṛ]).⁵⁹

Further, “India’s motto is ‘Truth Alone Prevails,’ i.e. only truth wins, and the meaning of truth in

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⁵⁷. The source for such a command is not apparent at first. The source for Khan’s reference to the freedom to profess and propagate religion is clearly Article 25 of the Constitution of India that reads: “Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion.” No command to respect another’s faith, however, exists in the country’s Constitution or in any part of the Indian Penal Code to the best of my knowledge. The ‘command clause’ seems to be Khan’s editorial addition to the ‘freedom clause’ of Article 25. Nevertheless, this addition is very much in line with his larger argument: that an ethic by minority Christians in multifaith and secular India must include respect for people of other faiths.

⁵⁹. Adharm can mean both ‘a-religious’ and ‘unrighteous/contrary to dharm.’ McGregor, in his Hindi-English dictionary, notes only the latter meaning for adharm: unrighteousness, immorality, wickedness, sin, guilt, crime, irreligiosity, impiety (Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary, 25). In the context of Khan’s argument, however, adharm is better translated as ‘a-religious’ or the ‘lacking religion.’ Khan, to elaborate, contrasts adharm with
Indian philosophy is God.” Further, “[f]or a Christian, Christ is the truth,” but every Indian Christian shares in the search for truth that exceeds religions.

What, then, must a Christian do to seek truth, as part of her call to love her neighbors, and in the socio-political context of a religiously diverse nation? To achieve this task, Khan offers some “good practices” (vyāvāhārik subhāv).

First, claiming that he is a member of the Kingdom of God, a Christian should not run away from politics because he also is a member of the kingdom of the world.61

Second, a Christian should not live in the country as a citizen with a negative attitude [or, as someone who only complains]. He should not just always complain that there is corruption in the country, [or that] law is weak. He should not blame this on others, he himself is also at fault because he has failed to make Christian values influential [in public life].

Third, he should abandon such thinking that there is purity in politics or that politics is a pit of evil [literally, “the bowels of Satan”]. Politics is the mixture of the pure and the evil [literally, “devilish”] and it is the duty of a Christian to participate in politics and strengthen the forces of good.

Fourth, a Christian should not become the pawn of a [political] party but should become a person who expresses his rights and vote according to Christ’s teachings.

Fifth, he should not always think that his perspective is the best. He should be humble.

Sixth, a Christian should not think that solving only one problem will solve every problem of the nation. For instance, controlling population, eradicating gambling, etc. He should be engaged always in the task of strengthening social welfare, law, freedom, and security.62
In light of the responsibility Christians share with other citizens to ensure that truth prevails in matters of personal relations and affairs of the state, Khan encourages his readers to reject arguments against political involvement and to embrace their place in national governance among India’s other religionists. It is a Christian’s task not only to contribute to improving the nation but also to use her involvement in governance to share Christian values and to make them effective in the life of the nation.

Being a prophet who calls out injustice and wrongs is not enough; a Christian must also lead and affect change; a failure to affect change is a failure to participate. “Participation in politics,” Khan declares, “is the responsibility of a Christian life.” Politics is neither dirty nor clean; it is complex and both and a Christian must encourage the good (“strengthen the forces of good”; “śubh śakti ko prabal kare”) where things are bad. A Christian need not align herself to a political party. Khan does not ask Christians to reject political parties but to not become a “pawn” of parties. In other words, a Christian’s affiliation to Christ’s teachings and Christian values is independent of her political affiliations. It is relevant to observe here that, unlike political theologies that place an affiliation with Christ above that to political parties, Khan is quiet on the subject. He does not assert mutually exclusive relations to Christ and political parties. He seems, rather, to propose that a Christian use Christ’s teachings as the standard to discern the way to exercise democratic rights and obligations. Put differently, where party politics and Christian teachings align in a Christian’s judgment, she can be loyal to both.

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Cauthā, masīhī kisī pārṭī kā mohrā hī na ban kar rahe parantu ek aisā vyakti bane jo apne adhikār aur mat ko masīhī ki šikṣāōṁ ke anusār vyakt kartā hai.

Pāṁcvā, use sadā yah nahīṁ socnā cāhie ki uskā drṣṭikoṇ sarvāśreṣṭh hai. Use apnā prabhāv vinamr rūp se dāīnā cāhīe.

Chaṭhvāṁ, masīhī ko yah nahīṁ socnā cāhīe ki ek hī samasyā ke hul ho jāegī. Udāharaṇ ke lie nasbandī, jūāvarjan ityādi. Use jankalyāṇ, nyāy, svatantrātā aur surakṣā kī bhāvānā ko sadṛṛh banāne ke lie sadā prayatnsīl rahnā cāhīe.

63. Khan, Khristīy Nītiśāstr, 234: Rājānīti mein bhāg lenā khristīy jīvan kā uttardāyītv hai.
Finally, loving one’s neighbor and political participation in India necessarily involves, Khan reminds his readers, a commitment to and investment in interfaith dialogue— or, to reaching out, learning from, and understanding the beliefs, practices, and motivations of neighbors of other faiths. Consequently, Khan elevates interfaith relations to a central goal of Christian theology and ethics in India in *Samvād*. *Samvād* constitutes the fourth time that Khan writes on interfaith learning and relations following commentary, as we have discussed above, in *Islām* (1974), *Khristiy Nitiśāstr* (1981), and *Bīsăvīṁ Satābdī ke Pramukh Dharmāvijñānī* (1990). Given the clarity with which he makes this case while introducing *Samvād*, I would like to reproduce here a substantial part of that introduction:

Modern communal intolerance, fanaticism and fundamentalism are producing such feelings of discord between followers of different faiths that our mutual relations have been polluted and we have started to view each other with disgust and doubt. Coexistence in such a situation has started to negatively affect our ethical, social and material values. Some people are engaged in fulfilling their political greed by misusing religion. Communal riots are gaining force and the minority community is living in fear. Falsities against each others’ religions are being preached. Ethical values, especially the law is weak. Even some improper religious practices are rearing their heads. In such a situation ‘interfaith dialogue’ is becoming ever more necessary. Through this interfaith dialogue we can together attempt to stem the loss of ethics and the fall of religious values. Interfaith dialogue promotes not only the rooting up of biases but also the understanding among people of different faiths to live together. As we have previously seen, interfaith dialogue is the process through which we attempt to understand the practices, values and religious experiences of other faiths. If there is true intention behind this [process] then all distances are bridged and we come so close to each other that a fraternal feeling arises in us and hand-in-hand we start climbing toward that peak where the reconciliation of human with God and of human with human starts to become real.

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64. And it is important to note that interfaith dialogue or interfaith learning is, in itself, not the goal of such engagements but rather interfaith dialogue should lead to interfaith learning which in turn serves to improve interfaith relations, which are the ultimate goal of interfaith dialogues.

Interfaith dialogue also has some enemies and the chief enemy among these enemies is communalism. Communalism means the misuse of religion for political gains. The second enemy of interfaith dialogue is ‘fanaticism’ or ‘I have the contract on truth, only my religion is true and other faiths are gifts of the devil.’ This madness stands on the foundation of spiritual pride. It sows the seeds of disgust and impedes the living together of people of different faiths. The third enemy of interfaith dialogue is our ignorance, i.e., our limited knowledge of each other’s religion and [our] misconceptions or unlimited knowledge of [their] so-called faults. As soon as interfaith dialogue starts some ignorant people start describing the faults in the other person’s religion and launch such an attack that converts dialogue into argument and argument into fisticuffs. Instead of understanding each other [people] start hating each other. For this reason, interfaith dialogue fails in its goal until one does not have proper knowledge of one’s faith and that of another. The fourth main enemy of interfaith dialogue is fundamentalism (Fundamentalism). Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan! Islam is in danger! To exile writers, thinker, and philosophers in the name of religion and sharia, to proclaim death fatwas, these are examples of religious fanaticism, fundamentalism. Its cries are echoing in the skies on a daily basis. On the other hand, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, etc. are also falling victim to fundamentalism. The slogan “proudly declare we are Hindu” is gaining strength in India.

Muslim fanaticism is taking on a scary face in Islamic countries. In Burma Buddhism is becoming a military religion. If Christianity adopts a fanatic attitude toward the teachings of Jesus Christ the world will benefit. Because the first rule of Christianity is “love your God and your neighbor with all your body-mind and wealth.” It is the goal of Christianity to establish the Kingdom of God in the world and the first and last of this kingdom is Lord Jesus Christ, who accompanies humans, tends to the person who is hurt and whoever accepts Jesus Christ receives the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

66. I.e., the minority religious communities.
67. To re-iterate: it is Khan’s argument that this is what Christian fanaticism looks like: Christianity removed from the process of interfaith dialogue.
The presence and impact on society of such claims, Khan argues, makes interfaith dialogue a necessity for this day and age.

This era gravely needs interfaith dialogue. Maybe it is only through these dialogues that we will reclaim our lost unity. Abolish those bad religious practices that have reared their heads. Join together to save those ethical [and] social values that are being lost. Free social life from fear and as a person of faith become able to care for the welfare of another person of faith without any personal benefit.

India is a living example of multiple groups, multiple races, and multiple religions but this plurality’s vision of unity in diversity and diversity in unity is starting to appear as a hollow reality in light of rising communalism. Diversity is not taking [us] toward unity but is taking us toward division. Every day we are becoming strangers to one another. Politics has corrupted religion and diverted it from its goal. In light of the current situations prevalent in the nation, interfaith dialogue is needed where, with wide open minds and having adopted a positive attitude toward each other’s faith, and having removed enmity and discord from our minds, remove all those misconceptions and accept that the use of religion for political and economic gain is very deserving of scorn. Religion teaches a person to fulfill her duties, especially those duties that bring together a human with God and that fill her spirit with peace and joy and that motivate her to help realize the dream of ‘God’s kingdom’ and ‘God’s city’ in this world.

For Khan, a Christian is called to interfaith dialogue and relations in God’s command to love God and neighbor. As we explored above, the call to love God and neighbor is itself interpreted in the light of an Indian Christian’s particular location as a call to (i) respect people of other

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Istāmī deśom meṁ musīlm kaṭṭarvād ek bhayāvah śakl le rahā hai. Barnā meṁ buddhādharm, sainik dharm bantā jā raḥā hai. Masīhī dharm yadi prabhu yīśu kī šikṣā ke prati rūḍhivādī drṣṭikoṇ apnātā hai to yah sansār ke lie kalyāṅ kārak hogā. Kyonki masīhī dharm kā mukhy niyam hai “tu tan-man dhan se apne paramesvar ko prem kar aur apne Paroṣi se prem kar.” Masihi dharm kā mukhy lakṣy sansār meṁ paramesvar ko rájy ke bān kē śhāpānā karnā hai aur is rájy kā pratham aur antim prabhu yīśu masīh hai, jo manuṣy ke sāthī hain, vah ghāyal manuṣy ke jakhmoṁ par paṭṭī bāндhīte haiṁ aur jo prabhu yīśu masīh ko svikār kartā hai uske pāpoṁ ko kṣamā kar use anant jīvaṁ pradān karte haiṁ.


Bhārat varṣ bahu samudāy, bahu jāti evam bahudharmoṁ kē ek jē ṣaṁvādoṁ le ṣaṁvādoṁ ke dvārā hi hum vah ekātā aur ekātā meṁ anekātā kē dārāṁ ubharte hue sāṁpradāyikātavād meṁ ek thothā sā niyam prati hone lagā hai. Anekātā, ekātā kē or to naṁin le jā raḥi varan vah hameṁ vibhājan kē or le jā raḥi hai. Prati din hum ek dāsre ke lie aṇāṁ bante jā rahe hain. Rājānīti ne dham ko dūṣit kar use lakṣy se bhāṭkā diyā hai. Deṁ meṁ gaṭṭī hūṁ in vartāṁn parishtihitoṁ ko dekhkar antardhārmik saṁvād kē āvaśyakātā hai jahāṁ hum baḍe khule dimāg se aur ek dāsre te dham ko prati sakārātmak ravaṁyā apnāte hue aur kaṭutā ur visāmātā ko man se dūr kar karte hue, un samast galatāfahmiyōṁ ko dūr kareṁ aur yah svikār kareṁ kē rājānītik evam ārthik lābhōṁ ke lie dham kē upāyoṁ ati nindāṁyā hai. Dham manuṣy ko apne kartavyoṁ kē pālan sikhātā hai, viśeṣākar ke kartavyo joh manuṣy ko īśvar se jodte haiṁ aur uski ṭūṁ meṁ sānti aur ānan ko bhār dēte haiṁ aur manuṣy is sansār meṁ īśvar rájy’ athāvā ‘īśvar nagārī’ kē svapn sākār karne meṁ agrāsar ho jātā hai.
faiths, (ii) participate in governance for the sake of welfare in society, (iii) learn about the beliefs and practice of one’s neighbors as a means to better love one’s neighbors, and importantly, to (iv) care for one’s neighbor and fellow citizens without regard for caste, creed, and position in society.

Having examined the way in which Khan’s ethics unfolds, it is easier to discern the ways in which he adapts Bonhoeffer’s understanding of the relation between Christian ethics and society. Where Bonhoeffer sought a witnessing community that lived in opposition – consider the experiment in communal living that Bonhoeffer led at Zingst and Finkewalde from April 1935 – Khan wants Indian Christians to be involved actively and closely in shaping the affairs of the nation. Further, where the rise of Deutsche Christen (“German Christians”) inspired Bonhoeffer to seek a confessing church independent of state power and leaders, Khan asks his readers to embrace politics, participate actively, and imbibe the nation’s polity with Christian values. Indian Christians may not constitute a demographic force or dominate democratic power, Khan acknowledges, yet they must bring their values to national governance and in so doing live actively and fully in the world. In a democratic nation where religion dominates public life, active involvement in building interfaith relations provides Christians with an invaluable basis for public participation. Interfaith relations not only provide Christians with a basis for public participation but they also, as we will now see in the case of Dayal’s work, constitute for Christians an effective tool to build public relations.

69. Which he described in Life Together (orig. German 1938). For an introduction to the experiment, see Bonhoeffer, Life Together, 10-11 and Metaxas, Bonhoeffer, 262-77.
Theology and Public Relations in the Writings of Din Dayal

The corpus of writings by Din Dayal consists of three major publications. The first in 1997, *Uttar Bhārat aur Pākistān meṁ Masīhī Dharm: Pratham Śatābdī se Bīsavīīṁ Śatābdī ke Ārambh Tak* ("The History of Christian Religion in North India and Pakistan: From the First Century to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century"), examined the growth of south Asian Christian communities amidst the political, social, and religious realities of the region. The second major work, *Masīhī Dharm Vijñān kā Paricay* ("An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology") in 2005, provided seminarians, pastors, and lay leaders a primer in Indian Christian theology and encouraged Indian Christians to pay attention to the effects of their theologies on their public relations in India. The third major work, *Vyaktigat Manan-Cintan* ("Personal Reflections") in 2007, invited readers on a journey of daily prayer and reflection. As I will show in his work on theology that is most relevant to this study, Dayal, like Khan, wants Christian theology not only to teach and guide Christian formation but also to facilitate political engagement and public relations in India. Christian words and deeds should attend to their impact on the ways in which people of other faiths may perceive and relate to those words and deeds.

70. Dayal is an author also of speeches, reports, and sermons. During research in Delhi I learned that some of these additional writings are stored with the archives of the Church of North India (C.N.I.). A more detailed search of C.N.I.’s archives is needed to comprehensively explore Dayal’s extant writings. I was, however, unable to conduct this search while in Delhi. While it is, of course, theoretically possible that such a search may reveal evidence that greatly complicates my claims regarding his commitment to the positive impact of Christian theology on public relations, it is a safe and educated guess that such an outcome is highly improbable in light of Dayal’s biography, career, and major works.

In light of the limitation, I have focused on those works of Dayal that the Hindi Theological Literature Committee, in its role as publisher of the major works of Dayal, has identified as important and original contributions to Hindi Christian literature. (See J.H. Anand’s forewords to Dayal, *Vyaktigat Manan-Cintan*)
Dayal’s biography partly explains his attention to public witness and relations. Dayal was born in the State of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) in north India on 20 July, 1925 into a Christian family. He studied at the Christian High Schools in Etah and Farrukhabad (both in U.P.). After working with the Indian Railways for a year after High School, he earned an Intermediate (or pre-University) certificate from Ewing Christian College (Allahabad) and then a B.A. in 1949 from Allahabad University. Involved in church work from an early age, he entered Leonard Theological College (Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh) in 1949 and earned a B.D. in 1952. From 1952-53, his church put him in charge of a national project called “The Christian response to Communism.” This was his first ‘diplomatic’ mission on behalf of north Indian churches: to communicate and explore the Christian response to communism. This project took him all over the country and immersed him for the first time in matters of social policy as a faith leader.

1952-53 was an important period in the political life of the nation. Independent India had just concluded its first general elections in 1951, which had led to the formation of the first duly-elected national government under Jawahar Lal Nehru. The election was held in 26 states and 401 constituencies for 489 seats in the Lok Sabha (the Lower House of the national Parliament). The Indian National Congress (I.N.C.) won 45% of the votes and a majority of the states with 363 seats. The Communist Party of India (C.P.I.) emerged behind the I.N.C with 15 seats in 4 different regions (7 seats in Madras, 1 in Orissa, 2 in Tripura, and 5 in West Bengal). 

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Around the nation, other influential developments in polity and governance were also taking place. The Soviet-inspired central Planning Commission, established by the Government of India in March 1950, issued its first five-year plan in 1951 and placed India on the path of socialist development. Further, the C.P.I. was becoming a political force at the state levels in south, central, and eastern India, challenging the I.N.C. for dominance in state governance, where a lot of the decisions with the most direct impact on peoples’ lives took place. Amidst these developments, Dayal took on the diplomatic challenge to discern the response of north Indian churches to the political, social, and economic trends ascendant in the nation. After completing his research on “The Christian response to Communism,” Dayal was ordained as a pastor in 1953 and from 1953-55 served as the chaplain at Allahabad Agricultural Institute.

The early 1950s was also a time for ecumenical revival among north Indian churches and, as an expression of this unity, these churches decided to send missionaries to east Africa. Dayal and his wife, Roja, departed for Kenya in 1955 as the first missionaries from the uniting churches in north India to Africa. They served in Kenya from 1955-64; Dayal built a Community Center in Nairobi and they evangelized and shared the fellowship of Indian churches throughout Kenya. This sojourn in Africa was Dayal’s second diplomatic mission on behalf of north Indian churches. After Kenya, Dayal and Roja left for his studies in the U.S., where he earned a Th.M. from Pittsburgh Seminary (1964-65).

Dayal’s life as an ordained minister placed him in public roles. After returning from the U.S., Dayal became pastor of a United Church of North India (U.C.N.I.) congregation in Allahabad. In

73. During research in India, I tried and failed to locate the results of Dayal’s research – either a report to his employers, a summary of results, or other relevant data. Consequently, I have not been able to analyze his findings and compare them to future writings on the role and public relations of Christianity in India.
a few years he was elected Moderator (or Chairperson) of the North India Synod of the U.C.N.I. in 1968 and served in that role till 1970. When the U.C.N.I. merged with other north Indian denominations to form the Church of North India (C.N.I.) in 1970, Dayal became the Bishop of the Lucknow Diocese of C.N.I. He served as Lucknow’s Bishop for 14 years and was elected Deputy Moderator of C.N.I. in 1984. In 1987, after 34 years in various roles on behalf of the churches in north India, he was elected the Moderator (or national leader) of one of north India’s largest Protestant denominations in 1987. He retired from the C.N.I. in 1990.

Leadership roles within the U.C.N.I. and C.N.I from 1968 to 1990 made Dayal a public figure. As the Delhi-based chairperson of C.N.I., Dayal also found himself in the political heart of the nation. He represented his denomination in interreligious and ecumenical meetings; engaged with leaders of faiths, politics, business, and society; and kept close attention to the larger life of the church. It is quite appropriate, then, that in his introduction to Dayal’s Uttar Bhārat aur Pākistān meṁ Masīhī Dharm John Henry Anand felt the need to highlight Dayal’s life-long concern with the “universal life and work of the church” (kalīsiyā ke sārvālaukik jīvan evam kāry [ke lie]). While Dayal’s biography sheds light on the importance he placed on public relations, such a focus should also be understood in light of the theological arguments he presents in Masīhī Dharm Vijñān kā Paricay (2005), his central text on theology, ethics, and public discourse.

Dayal makes a three-pronged theological case for the importance of public relations in Masīhī Dharm Vijñān kā Paricay that mostly parallels Khan’s proposal. First, Christians are called to live in and shape their societies rather than to create separate, special Christian societies. Second,
witnessing in a pluralist context (like India’s) invites Christians to understand the impact of their witness on people of other faiths. Third, Christian relationships are the outcome of God’s manner of self-revelation. In other words, Dayal’s theology of divine self-revelation provides the theological basis for his proposals regarding Christian public relations.

A Christian, for Dayal, is called to public service primarily because the good news of Christ seeks to promulgate the salvation of all humanity. Christ did not come to establish a separate society – see, for instance, Dayal’s commentary on the “Kingdom of God,” which is discussed below – but rather taught and practiced the values on which society and culture at large could be built. Humans, and not God, are the makers (nirmātā) of civilization and culture, and Christianity is to culture as salt is to food. In other words, Christianity must flavor culture. To bring about this effect is, Dayal argues, the duty of every Christian. He explains:

> The gospel of Lord Jesus is not in order to establish any special civilization but the gospel is for the salvation of humanity. The creation of civilization and culture is in the hands of humans. Without doubt, Christianity is like salt. For this reason, a Christian’s faith must affect culture. It is the duty of Christians that they contribute to the making of culture in the context of their society and nation. Christians do not possess any Christian scheme for culture.

Christians do not possess a plan for culture just as they do not possess a plan to establish Christ’s kingdom on earth. They possess, rather, the good news of the Kingdom of God that Jesus shared with them. They are called to preach that good news in the societies and localities in which they live as citizens and members. Is this idea of a Kingdom of God “meaningful in our secular time and in our time of economic and scientific progress?” “Yes,” Dayal answers, because “we have

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always longed for peace”; because “the world is not rid of conflicts and terrible weapons.” “Do we no longer have injustice, poverty, exploitation, and terrible diseases?” No. That is why “we have to share the good-news of Christ to the modern world.”  

Preaching in a pluralist society, however, invites awareness of public relations. Consequently, while Dayal encourages Indian Christians to profess and practice their faith – as is their Constitutional right – he also invites them to do so while aware of the relation between what they preach and the beliefs of people of other faiths. He explains:

> Pluralism is a special feature of culture. For this reason, culture is faced with the challenge to accept many beliefs. No society can possess all the virtues even if it likes them all. A society has many beliefs because there are many humans and their goals and needs are many. … In a pluralist society, things like the Kingdom of God, Lord Jesus Christ, God the Father and good news are very important beliefs for Christian believers. However, they are important only for Christians.

Christians need not ignore what is important to them. They should, rather, Dayal offers, recognize a plurality of beliefs and be able to locate the importance of their beliefs and practices amidst the importance placed by others on other beliefs and practices. Given Dayal’s overall thesis, and the fact that he remained committed to ecumenism throughout his ministry, it can be safely argued that ‘pluralism-as-the-acceptance-of-many-beliefs’ in Dayal’s writings may be interpreted as recognition of diversity both among faiths and within them.

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Finally, ‘pluralism-as-relations-among-people-with-many-beliefs’ is a natural outcome of the way in which God self-reveals in the world. Christ’s life and actions may be very important to Christians – as noted above – but God does limit God’s self-revelation to the words and deeds of Jesus, Dayal proposes. One cannot “fully understand” another, he explains, until the other reveals or shares about herself. Similarly, people come to understand God because God self-reveals. Further, God self-reveals to people of all people and all faiths, Dayal explains, but beliefs concerning God differ among people. Different beliefs then represent different understandings of the expressions of God. As Dayal puts it,

A person cannot fully understand another person until the other person shares about herself. … God self-reveals. He self-reveals his power and nature. It is God who has self-revealed to the entire world and to people of all faiths. For this reason people of all faiths say there is God. It is another matter that there are differences in beliefs regarding God. Most Hindus believe in many goddesses and gods. But their supporters and thoughtful Hindus say that all goddesses and gods are powers of the same Lord. That is why they can worship Lord in any form. In reality very few Hindus worship a formless Brahma. … In Islam, there are many beautiful names of Allah that point toward his qualities. Allah is omnipotent and just. Many philosophers say that the supreme spirit is the basis of all life. It is the source of our highest ethical and intellectual desires. It is a living force and directs and attracts all creation.

78. Dayal does not clarify whether the “full understanding” claimed due to self-revelation within human-human relations transfers to divine-human relations in his analogy. By presenting the transfer of knowledge in both relations as analogous, he seems to imply “full understanding” of God is possible. His comments, however, on the different interpretations of God’s self-revelation – and Dayal does not argue that there are multiple and different self-revelations by God but rather multiple and different interpretations by humans – complicate a straight reading of the full-understanding clause. Further, Dayal does not make any claims regarding the achievement of full understanding in either type of relations (i.e., divine-human and human-human relations). Full understanding, the textual evidence suggests, remains a possibility in Masīhī Dharm Vijñān rather than a task completed.

Dayal’s doctrine of self-revelation, which is both a human and a divine act, leads to a few observations. (1) The agency to reveal rests with a God who has self-revealed to all. Consequently, it is difficult to deny the presence of God’s self-revelation in other faiths. (2) Human-divine relations are possible because we can understand God’s self-revelation. Dayal explains that “a human’s wisdom and judgment contain the likeness of God. If God and human did not share a likeness then a meeting between the two would not have been possible. God would not have self-revealed on a human if a human did not have the ability to understand and meet God.” (3) Each religion has something to contribute to the understanding of God. It follows, then, that a Christian can learn from other religions about God. (4) The reality of pluralism-as-respect-for-the-value-of-other-beliefs invites Christians to evangelize and attract converts in collegial ways.

The absence of any sustained focus on the task of evangelism (or, pracār-kāry) in a Hindi-language book on Indian Christian theology is conspicuous in light of the many Hindi Christian works on evangelism (two of which were discussed above). Yet, Dayal manages to lay the seeds for the type of evangelism that gets sustained treatment in the influential work of Richard Howell on the topic in Parivartan (2006), published one year after Dayal’s Masīhī Dharm Vijñān. Both the timing and context of Parivartan’s publication made it an important contribution to ongoing debates around the public role and relations of Christianity in India.

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EVANGELISM AND CHRISTIAN IDENTITY IN THE WRITINGS OF RICHARD HOWELL

At the time of Parivartan’s publication, Howell was the national leader and General Secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of India (E.F.I.). The E.F.I is a group of more than 250 evangelical, independent, and denominational churches from all parts of India. Many of E.F.I.’s members, which include Pentecostal, Baptist, C.N.I., and Assembly of God churches, are dedicated to evangelization and church planting. The Fellowship further includes numerous independent and ecumenical seminaries – like the Pune-based Union Biblical Seminary (which seeks to fulfill the Great Commission in the context of India) – that train preachers, pastors, and church planters. Members include, for example, the Evangelise India Fellowship, Gospel for India, Hosanna Human Development Society, New Life Ministries, Tribals Transformation India, and the World Cassette Outreach of India.

A publication that addressed evangelization from the national head of E.F.I., then, carried special weight\(^1\) and, contrary to public perceptions of Indian evangelists as confrontational fundamentalists, Howell made the case for a type of evangelism that in its words and deeds was collegial and respectful towards people of other faiths. In the second chapter, I examined the vocabulary of evangelization as proposed by Howell. Here I seek to thicken that commentary with an analysis of the theological framework within which Howell makes his proposals. To understand Howell’s comments on the impact of evangelism on Christian public relations in

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1. Howell was ordained by the Evangelical Church of India. From 1990-96 he served as the Principal of Allahabad Bible Seminary and from 1996-97 as the Associate General Secretary of E.F.I. He was elected General Secretary of E.F.I. in May 1997. He has also served as the Secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of Asia, Member of the Continuation Committee of the Global Christian Forum, and Vice-Chairperson of the International Council of the World Evangelical Alliance.

Other published works by Howell include Free to Choose and Transformation at Work (both in English) and Mission (in Hindi). He also serves as the chief editor of Aim, the monthly newsletter of E.F.I. (Biographic details from Howell, Parivartan)
India, it is helpful to recognize the larger theological context within which Howell locates the
task of evangelism. Howell outlines this context in the opening chapter of *Parivartan* titled *Badi
Tasvīr ko Dekhnā* (“Seeing the Big Picture”). The Bible narrates the story of God and this is a
story of God, God’s lost creation, and the re-establishment or reconciling of that creation. Howell
uses an active verb like ‘reconciling’ rather than a noun like ‘reconciliation’ to describe
the crux of the biblical story because he wants to draw attention to the source and agent of
creation and reconciliation. This agency matters to him because his theology is a theology of
mutual roles between God and humans, a theological account in which God takes on certain roles
and places us in complementary roles within the unfolding of God’s reconciling act.

The story of God’s reconciling act builds on four motifs. First, God is the source and reconciler
of creation that separates itself from God. Second, God creates creatures to be in relationships,
with God and with each other (sin ruptures this relationship). Third, God is Lord, Lord of
creation, Lord of creatures, and Lord of relationships. In other words, creatures owe certain
responsibilities to God. Finally, in light of such an arrangement, God and creatures play certain
parts in the biblical accounts. God’s parts include God’s participation in creation as its creator,
sustainer, and guide – Howell uses the word *niyantran*, or “control,” to describe God’s
management but uses it to clarify that while God was the “lord of the bigger picture” (“*is baḍī
tasvīr kā mālik vo hī thā*”) it is each person’s responsibility to control her own actions – law-
giver, and its reconciler.

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82. Howell, *Parivartan*, 7: “The Bible tells us the story of God. It is the story of God, and God’s lost
creation, and [the story of] its re-establishment.” (*Bāibal hameṁ parameśvar kī kahānī batātī hai. Ye parameśvar kī
aur uski khoi huī srṣṭi evam use punahsthāpit karne kī kahānī hai*).

83. Howell, *Parivartan*, 10: “For this reason the Bible begins with this thought, that God is in the form of
the source, relationships are in the form of a priority, and God is in the form of a Lord.” (*Istie bāibal kā ārambh isī
vicār ke sāth hotā hai ki parameśvar ek srot ke rūp mein, sambandh ek prāthamikātā ke rūp mein aur parameśvar ek
adhikārī ke rūp mein hai*.)
God is the party with authority (the “adhiḵārī,” or one possessing authority) in the big-picture divine-human relationship, but in the realm of individual actions, personal responsibility remains paramount. In other words, a Christian cannot lose sight of her responsibilities qua Christian even as she recognizes the larger story of divine action within which her story exists. Interpreting Job 38:4, then – where God asks Job, “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?” (NRSV) – Howell writes: “In this big picture our control is limited – rather, speaking truthfully, we never had control. But our control over our behavior is necessary and we certainly should keep our behaviour under control. God’s role is in the control of this bigger picture and our role is to be in control of [or, in charge of] ourselves and our responsibilities. This means that we should maintain ‘self-control’ [under God’s overall control].”

While recognizing this bigger picture, a Christian has certain responsibilities towards God, and primary among them is the responsibility to be “facilitators” of God’s care for God’s creation. To those who seek to live responsibly, then, Howell gives the following advice,

> We must gain an understanding of the proper place of our lives in this larger story of the Bible and of what God is doing in this world. We must proceed in our struggle and we must discern our place and role in that great and big plan of God. Beseech God to help you understand and see these things in your life.

Howell, in other words, presents a theology of mutual and corresponding responsibilities. God’s role is to be the source; ours is to depend on God. God is the creator (and creates things to be in

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85. Howell, *Parivartan*, 18: *Bāibil kī is pūrī kahānī mein hamāre jīvaṁ kā ucit sthān kyā hai, aur parameśvar is saṁsār mein kyā kucch kar rahā hai is bāt kā hameṁ jāṁ prāpt karnā hai. Hameṁ apne sāṅghārśon se āge baṁhā hai aur parameśvar ke us vrhad aur baḍī yojānā mein hamārā sthān evam bhūmikā kyā hai isko jāṁnā hai. Parameśvar se kahie ki ve āpko jīvaṁ ke in viṣayōṁ ko jāṁnī aur dekhne mein āpki madād kareṁ.*
relationships); we are creatures and cannot live without our relationship with God. God is lord of creation and has control over it; we are called to live as people responsible for our actions. God is the law-giver and judges lives; we are called to experience life (and not judge others) and live in public witness and discipleship according to God’s teachings.  

In the context of India’s pluralist context, these responsibilities take on a particular form and Howell (a la Khan and Dayal) argues that it is a Christian’s “responsibility” (kartavy) to contribute to the political life of the nation. Howell’s call to active participation in the political life of the nation, even as Christians propagate their faith, is then best understood as a call to assume the responsibilities of one created by God to be in and to help facilitate healthy relationships with God and others. These responsibilities are, after all, not just for an ethical life but also in order to facilitate the benefits of those inter-human relationships to which a human is oriented in her creation by God.

86. Howell, Parivartan, 15: Howell tabulates these roles in this way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>God is the source</th>
<th>We depend on God</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God is the creator</td>
<td>We are creation and cannot bloom without Him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God has authority over the world and controls it</td>
<td>We are self-regulated, i.e., we can control ourselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God judges lives</td>
<td>We experience life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God created humans and made laws for them</td>
<td>We follow God’s laws in our lives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameśvar</th>
<th>Manusy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parameśvar srot hai</td>
<td>Hum parameśvar par nirbhar haiṁ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parameśvar racayitā hai</td>
<td>Hum racnā hai aur uske binā vidvān nahīṁ rahoṁ sakte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parameśvar ke pāś saṁsār kā adhikār hai aur vah us par niyantrān kartā hai</td>
<td>Hum svayam-kendrit hai arthāt apne ko niyantrīn kar sakte hain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parameśvar jīngagiyōṁ kā nyāy karne vālā hai</td>
<td>Hum jīvan kā anubhav karte hain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parameśvar ne manusy kī racnā kī aur uske lie niyam banāeṁ</td>
<td>Hum parameśvar dvārā batāe niyamōṁ kā apnī jīngagiyōṁ meṁ pālan karte hain.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
God calls us to action in particular contexts, Howell explains, and in the context of the particular challenges faced by India, Indian Christians must contribute to address those challenges. Of the current situation in India, he writes,

Indian democracy is facing new challenges, communal conflicts, the fight against terrorism, and meeting the needs of a young generation. India needs to improve the way it does things. This means the democracy needs people who are decisive, effective, and follow the Constitution, [and it needs the] enjoining of freedom with democracy, the rebuilding of political institutions that are broken and scattered, and above all that government institutions and officials understand and fulfill their duties. They must not only present legal matters but must also present ethical matters before the public and should themselves follow them. Without this democracy will become hollow, not only incompetent but also dangerous, with this freedom will be destroyed, freedom will be used for oppression, and society will be destroyed.\(^{87}\)

This is especially so because religion is not, Howell argues, a private matter but a public force in India and as such should be approached in a way that recognizes the ways in which religious matters shape public policies. As an immediate example, Howell cites the challenge posed to religious freedom by restrictive laws on conversions passed in four States in India. In such a climate, for a Christian to refrain from challenging unjust laws, Howell insists, would be tantamount to accepting injustice.\(^{88}\) He writes,

For Christians to abandon the political realm means accepting in a mistaken way the current state of social and political affairs. If certain special policies and injustices are not opposed on religious grounds then truly we condone them. It is the responsibility of Christians to participate in the political work of the nation, so that they may present their perspectives [on the state of affairs]. Christians in India are constantly having to oppose government schemes. As a small example, [consider] the adoption of religion-related

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87. Howell, Parivartan, 252: Bhārātīya prajātantr naī cunautiyaṁ kā, sāmudāyik sanghars, ātankvād se lāṁē, yuvā samājī kī vicārdhārāṁ ke sāth calnā, in sabkā sāmānī karī hāī. Bhārat ko apnī pāddhatī ko behtar banāne kī āvaśyakātā hāī. Iskā arth prajātantr ko nirnay lenevālā, prabhāvī, samvidhānātmaṁ, svaṇantrontrāvādā ko prajātantrār vīyavāhār mein jorrē, jūśī aur bikhārī hūyī rājānītik saṃsthāōṁ kā pūrṇnirmāṇ kārāū aur sabāī baḍhē karī sarkārī samsthāōṁ jāthē sattāhāryāīōṁ ko apnī jīmēvārī samajhnāī aur use nibhānā atyānt āvaśyak hāī. Unheṁ keval kānīnī nahiṁ parantu nattīk bāōōṁ kā udāharaṇ logōṁ ke sāmne rakhhā cāhī aur uskā svayam pālan kārā cāhī. Iskē bagār prajātantrār khokhā ban jēgā, keval aksām hī nahiṁ parantu khatarnēk bhiē, iske sāth svaṭantrontrāvād naṣṭh hō jēgā, svaṭantrontrātā kā upāyog atyācārī ke lie kīyā jēgā aur sāmānī jān jīvān naṣṭh hō jēgā.

88. At its core, Indian Christians object to laws that place conditions on the freedom to profess and propagate one’s faith, freedoms enshrined in India’s Constitution. Such conditions have been imposed, for instance, Indian Christians argue, in the form of laws that require the permission of local government officials (usually the local chief civil officer) prior to changing one’s religious affiliation or the expectation on those desiring to convert to show that coercion or enticements were not at play in their desire to change their religious affiliation.
bills in four States. So now what is the path ahead for us, increased participation in politics or a complete separation from politics?

Christian faith opposes the privatization of faith, [attempts to] limit faith, and to restrict it to the internal realm. Religion cannot be private, religion should be of a person or of a community.\textsuperscript{99} Religion always becomes part of many social and interpersonal responsibilities.\textsuperscript{90}

It could be argued that Howell’s call to public witness in the case of conversion-related laws is a contextual appeal that does not necessarily support the idea that such witness is generally part and parcel of being Christian in India. In other words, it could be argued that what we have here is a limited appeal to public social action that does not translate into making public socio-political witness a defining feature of Christian identity in Howell’s writings. Such an argument, however, fails to account for the ways in which Howell makes public witness a defining element of Christian witness in the context of the rights and responsibilities of a minority religious community that enjoys Constitutional rights and privileges but remains under threat and challenge when putting into practice its rights and privileges. Three arguments are worth noting here.

First, in being politically engaged, Christians avoid two fallacies: first, that changing public policies and laws will transform the world into the Kingdom of God on earth (such a task is left

\textsuperscript{89} Howell is arguing against attempts to understand and present religion as private, internal, and individualistic. Religion can, certainly, be personal, as in being a person’s beliefs and practices. Even when of a person, however, religious speech and acts are not limited to that person but, as Howell explains in the next sentence, religious speech and acts are always also becoming part of those social and inter-personal relationships in which any person finds herself and for which, theologically speaking for Howell, God has created us.

\textsuperscript{90} Howell, \textit{Parivartan}, 252-53: \textit{Masīhī viśvās – dharm ke nijīkaraṇ ke, dharm ko sīmit karne, aur use keval jīvan ke āntārik kṣetr tak hī rakhne, kā virodh kartā hai. Dharm nijī nahīṁ ho saktā, dharm kisi ek vyakti kā yā samudāy kā honā cāhie. Dharm sadaīv anek sāmājik tathā āpsī sambandho kī jimmedārī meṁ śamil hotā jātā hai.}
to God; a Christian is called to live-out the principles of the Kingdom of God preached by Christ; and second, that it is not important to improve social and political policies because we (Christians) are called to preach the good news. Howell, in other words, rejects any stark separation or co-identification of church and state, of the city of God and that of humans. He writes,

The reign of God should not be limited to ensuring relationships among humanity, bringing peace, expanding democracy, or to realizing social and occupational freedom. Holy Scripture does not speak of any one particular type of government. All types of politics can be misused. If responsible democracy can protect the decisions of politics, then it can also destroy anarchy. Christians should avoid two fallacies: first, that by changing any plan or system the world can be changed into a new society or the Kingdom of God, and second, that it is not important to improve social-political systems or plans because we are called to preach the good news.\(^{91}\)

Second, Christians serve the Kingdom of God by serving their neighbor and nation:

Christian folk, being citizens, serve the Kingdom of God by caring for their neighbor and nation. A mission that brings about conversion truly engages the perspective of Holy Scripture to eradicate social ills and to bring the values of the Kingdom of God to society.\(^{92}\)

Third, congregations exist in the world to reveal the reign of God to the world. As Howell puts it, if we are called to live in mutually-responsible relationships with each other, then we are all responsible for the rights and privileges of others. This does not mean our rights do not matter. It rather means that our responsibility is to create communities where co-responsibility and mutual-respect help us safeguard each others’ humanity and life. In doing so, Christians seek to create,


or become facilitators of attempts to create, communities that meet the type of relationships for
which God has created us and that God desires for us. He explains,

When the topic of discussion turns to human responsibility people often become anxious. Holy Scripture says a lot about the struggle for other peoples’ rights, but [it] says very little about the struggle for one’s rights. On the other hand, when it speaks about us it tells us not about our rights but [about our] responsibilities. We have been told to love God and our neighbor. Holy Scripture emphasizes that it is our responsibility to protect the rights of the other; and to do this we should even be ready to give up our rights.

We [Christians] should accept the fact that the rights of others are our responsibility. The local congregation exists to reveal the Kingdom of God. The congregation should live in the world as a community where human respect and equality are always present, and where people accept their responsibility towards one another, where there is no discrimination [and] favoritism, where [we] struggle on behalf of the poor and weak, and [where] where a human has the right to live as a human, just as God has made them and desires that they should live.93

When a Christian community fulfills its roles and responsibilities, it fulfills its calling to be a public sign and symbol to the Kingdom of God. In doing so, it presents to the world a “distinct conduct and character” (“bhinn caritr va svabhāv”). It presents to those around it a “distinct culture” (“bhinn saṃskṛti”) from that in which it finds itself. As a congregation it is responsible for robust involvement in the social and political life of the nation and, when doing so, responsible to “be a sign” and “become a means” and “point toward” the Kingdom of God.

Howell explains,

93. Howell, Parivartan, 271: Jab carcā kā viṣay mānāvīy jimmedārī kī or jātā hai tab log aksar becain ho jāte hai. Pavitr śāstr dūsroṁ ke adhikāroṁ ke lie sangharṣ karne ke viṣay mein bahut kucch kahtā hai, parantu apne adhikāroṁ ke lie sangharṣ karne ke viṣay mein bahut thoaṁ batāyā gayā hai. Dūsrī or jab vah hamāre viṣay mein kahtā hai to hameṁ apne adhikāroṁ ke lie sangharṣ karne ke viṣay mein nahīṁ parantu jimmedāriyōṁ ke viṣay mein batātā hai. Hameṁ parameśvar tathā ape Parāṣī se prem karne ke lie kahā gayā hai. Pavitr śāstr is bāt par jor detā hai ki dāsre vyakti ke lie adhikāroṁ ki rakṣā kārnā hamārī jimmedārī hai; aur aīsā karne ke lie hameṁ adhikār bhi chorne ke lie tāiyār rahā cāhie. Hameṁ is bāt ko svīkār kārnā cāhie ki dāsre logoṁ ke lie adhikār hamārī jimmedārī hai. Sthānīy kalīsiyā kā jīvan parameśvar ke rājī ko pragaṭ karne ke lie hai. Kalīsiyā ko saṁsār meṁ ek samudāy ke rūp meṁ rahā cāhie jahāṁ mānāv sammān aur samānātā ko sadaiv sthān diyā jātā hai, aur logoṁ ki ek dāsre ke prati jimmedārī ko svīkār kīyā jātā hai jismeṁ koī bhedbhāv nahīṁ, pakṣpāt nahīṁ, jahāṁ garīṁ aur kamjoroṁ ke lie sangharṣ kīyā jātā hai aur mānāv ko mānāv bankar rahne kā adhikār hai, thēk usī prakār jis prakār parameśvar ne unheṁ banāyā aur cāhā ki ve usī prakār rahem.
The distinct conduct and character of the Christian community is reflected in the way those chosen and called by God relate with other people [i.e., those who are not Christians]. The congregation is the people of God; it is the body and bride of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit. An awakened congregation is fully a family that is a family of faith. And as we have discussed above, a community of Christ should present a distinct culture. The congregation has a responsibility as the people called by God – to be a sign, and to become a means for the Kingdom of God. This means that this community hints towards the coming Kingdom of God. Being a community filled by the Holy Spirit, a congregation should present the Kingdom of God even in its quotidian [literally, “common” or “general”] life. Being a community of Christ, the congregation should manifest that coming kingdom in real terms in the world, because that kingdom empowers the fulfillment of life and justice for society and restoration [literally, “freedom from disease or health”] for the entire creation.

A recognizably Christian public witness is then, in Parivartan, an integral part of the Christian story Howell wants to tell in India. Further, as seen in Howell’s theology of mutual roles, the preaching of the good news – to which each Christian in India is called and has the Constitutional right – must be done in ways that reflect a culture of respect and collegiality towards people of other faiths.

**CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN A PLURALIST SOCIETY**

As we have explored in the preceding discussion, Khan, Dayal, and Howell each call for a robust public witness by Indian Christians, a call that is inherent in the ethos of the Hindi Christian view of life. It is rather noteworthy how they – writing independently during a span of nearly three
decades (1981-2007) on diverse topics and in different contexts\(^{95}\) – use remarkably similar words to describe the role of a Christian in the life of their nation. A Christian is responsible (\textit{jimmedār} – in Khan, Dayal, and Howell) for social policy. It is her duty (\textit{kartavy} – Khan, Dayal, and Howell) to seek justice, law, and safety for all. It is necessary (\textit{āvaśyak} – Khan, Dayal, and Howell) that a Christian \textit{qua} Christian – as a person called by the incarnate Christ to influence life in her particular neighborhood – to be fully involved in the governance of the community and in shaping its values and ideals. Finally, a Christian must play her part (\textit{bhūmikā} – Howell) as a facilitator of God’s reconciliation and reconciling act. Part of this witness is the commitment to impact Christian public relations. Another part is the ability to recognize the impact of Christian words and deeds on public perception and relations. How are Christian actions seen? How are Christians identified in the nation? What is their contribution to public life? How do Christians facilitate relations? These questions guide these examples of Hindi Christian literature.

The recognizable and public witness that Khan, Dayal, and Howell seek has three elements or goals: political engagement, interfaith relations, and Christian contributions. Khan, Dayal, and Howell do not just exhort their readers to public participation; they exhort a particular type of public participation. A Christian life of discipleship, while being a life modeled on Christ’s words and deeds, must also be a life of robust political engagement. Christians are called to affect the politics and governance of their communities. Khan, for instance, lays out a detailed rationale for Christian participation in politics and undercuts many of the usual Christian arguments against such engagement: a Christian is a member of the “kingdom of the world” as

\(^{95}\) And the texts examined do not reveal any evidence that Khan, Dayal, or Howell read the other person’s work examined here.
much a she is part of the “Kingdom of God”; being a prophet or naysayer is not enough, but a Christian must affect change; politics is neither good nor evil but both and a Christian must ensure the good prevails; finally, (you can) join politics without becoming the pawn of a political party. Similarly, Howell cautions Christians against a dual fallacy that plagues political theologies: public participation with the wrong goal (political engagement will bring about the Kingdom of God) and public participation with the wrong attitude (political matters do not concern Christians).

Further, public engagement in pluralist India involves a commitment to interfaith relations. As I have discussed above, Khan’s *Samvād* marks a culmination of a life-long interest in interfaith relations. Interfaith learning and dialogue seek to improve interfaith relations. Our vocabulary and practices, Howell argues in the context of evangelistic communications, must promote respect for the beliefs and practices of others. Indian Christians have the democratic and Constitutional right to propagate their faith; yet the exercise of such a right need not be in ways that, as discussed in the previous chapter, “hurt the feelings of people of other faiths” and in doing so “create trouble for Christians.”

Similarly, Dayal offers a theology of divine self-revelation that makes it difficult for Christians to ignore or denigrate the beliefs and practices of people of other faith and to not learn from them. His theology, as we have seen above, makes India’s pluralism nearly a ‘natural outcome’

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96. Howell, *Parivartan*, 171. Howell thinks that the practices of foreign missionaries in India also exacerbate the problem of inappropriate or unnecessarily derogatory language. He writes, “We would like to ask the congregations based outside India to be aware that due to the use of inappropriate mission language they not only hurt the feelings of people of other faiths but also create troubles for Christians [literally, “become an obstacle for Christians”].” *(Hum bharat ke bahar sthit kalisiyaoṁ se kahnā cāhte haiṁ ki ve is bāt ke visvē meṁ sacet raheṁ ki miśan āvyogy bhāṣā ke prayog ke kāraṇ ve yahāṁ any viśvās ke logoṁ kī bhāvānāoṁ ko hī keval ṭhes nahiṁ pahuṁcāte parantu masihiyonṁ ke lie bhī bādhā kā kāraṇ ban jāte haiṁ.)*
of the way in which God self-reveals to all peoples because, for Dayal, it is God’s self-revelation that creates the conditions for knowledge of God among people of different faiths. Dayal, further, is not alone in recognizing the importance of India’s pluralist context for Indian Christians. For all three authors, as discussed above, the context of pluralism within which Christians in India find themselves necessitates a commitment to interfaith learning and relations.

Finally, public participation through political engagements and interfaith relations seeks the propagation and influence of Christian values in polity, politics, and culture. In Khan’s political theology, political engagement comes with a larger purpose. Christians are called, he asserts, to ‘put the stamp’ of Christian values on policies and politics. What are these values? Khan, Dayal, and Howell generally identify them as social welfare, justice, freedom, and safety. These values are, conspicuously, not exclusive to Christian ethical discourses and their presentation in terms that are non-religion-specific makes them accessible and relatable to adherents of other faiths.

Khan identifies, as an instance, the protection of democratic principles as an important goal of Christian public witness. It is the responsibility ("uttardāyitv") of Christians, he writes, to “bring political power to the straight path” ("rājyāsattā ko sūdhe mārg par lānā"). He explains, “it is Christianly ethical to oppose a government that neglects the commandments of God, and it is the responsibility of Christians to bring to the straight path politics that is slipping into dictatorship”

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98. Or, the rule of one party, person, or institution. See Bahri, Rājpāl Hindī Šabdākoś, 128.
[literally, “politics that is rolling towards a monopoly”].” Similarly, even as Dayal warns his readers (a la Howell) not to equate the Kingdom of God with worldly governance or vice versa, he exhorts Christians to be like “salt to culture” whose duty (“kartavy”) is to ensure the necessary (“anivāry”) impact of Christian values on national polity and policies. Finally, Howell’s ecclesiology presents churches as the facilitators of God in their particular contexts. Echoing Khan, who adapts Bonhoeffer’s ideas on the public role of Christians, Howell calls on Indian churches to imprint the values of the Kingdom of God – justice, peace, fellowship, and freedom – on public policy and governance. Read in light of each other, then, the works of Khan, Dayal, and Howell reveal a consistent and discernible attention to a particular form of Christian public witness in India that is cognizant of the reality of pluralism and of life as a religious minority seeking a healthy public presence in the affairs of the nation.

99. Khan, Khristiy Nitiśāstr. 214: Vah rājy jo paramēśvar kā ājñāoṁ kī avāhelānā kare, uskā virodh karnā masīhi naitikātā hai, aur jo rājānīti ekādhikār kī or ludhak rahī ho usko sīdhe mārg par lānā masīhiyon kā uttardāyitv haiṁ.
100. Dayal, Masīhi Dharm Vijñān, 30.
Chapter Six

Message Matters
The form and content of Hindi Christian texts have been shaped by a particular set of forces. As examined in the first three chapters, three forces in particular—mission history, Indian Christianity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and India's cultural milieu at large—have played a crucial role in their development and continue to shape Hindi Christian literature in modern India. But, how did these forces shape this literature?

First, Western Christian missions in central and north India helped plant the seeds for many of the denominations and publishing houses that now constitute the bulk of the sources of production of Hindi-language Protestant Christian materials. From the Methodist Publishing House in Lucknow to the Hindi Theological Literature Committee in Jabalpur, missionary agencies and Hindi-focused missionaries provided the early impetus to and supported the development of Christian congregations and literature in the Hindi-speaking regions of India. The Baptist Missionary Society in Serampore and Fort William College in Calcutta produced materials in Hindi and provided instructions in reading and writing Hindi. Anglicans, and Methodist missionaries like C.W. David, started the Hindi Theological Literature Committee in 1956. Translations of the Hindi Bible by the Bible Society of India and other missionary agencies helped spread the gospel in Hindi. A majority of the publishing houses that produce Hindi Christian texts today are continuations or extensions of these denominational publishing houses.
The spirit of ecumenism that captivated global Christianity in the twentieth century also affected the production and distribution of Hindi Christian texts by bringing denominational bodies together in common institutions with shared goals and joint projects concerning Hindi materials. Such efforts included institutions like the Hindi Theological Literature Committee, Leonard Theological College, and the Indian Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge that were created to prepare pastors, educators, and leaders for Hindi-speaking churches, and joint projects like the popular hymn-book Ārādhānā ke Gīt, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church in Hindi, and an ongoing multi-volume Pulpit Bible Series.

Second, the mission field in which early Christians found themselves affected not just the choice of the language(s) used for evangelization and congregational life but also the type of messages that most resonated with the new congregations. A few aspects of this larger context within which Hindi Christianity has taken shape are particularly noteworthy for the way they shaped the development of Hindi congregations and theology and continue to shape them today. For instance, much Christian work in India took place among people who belonged to lower or marginal socio-economic and political backgrounds. This reality persists today. Most Christians in modern India have come from Dalit or ‘backward’ backgrounds, and conversion to

1. In the Indian context and especially in its official vocabulary, “backward” is a specific, legal, and measurable category. It marks a group’s comparative performance against national and state standards of educational, social, and economic development. For instance, according to the 1979 B.P. Mandal Commission on Backwardness, a Caste or Class of people is educationally backward if the number of children 5-15 years old who never attended school is at least 25 percent above the State average, or it is economically backward if the source of drinking water is beyond half a kilometer for more than 50 percent of the households. 11 such makers were used by the Mandal Commission and have since been used by successive Indian governments. Backward groups are generally classified under three broad categories: Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), and Other Backward Class (OBC). India’s Constitution provides that the State bear the burden to address backwardness caused by generations of caste-based discrimination. To meet this obligation, articles 15 and 16 the Constitution of India permit positive discrimination by the State in favor of those disadvantaged groups officially classified as “backward.” Such positive discrimination is usually achieved by reserving a certain number of government jobs and admissions in public institutions of education for members of backward groups. This system is colloquially known as ‘Reservations’ (or, Ārakṣaṇ) in India. In order to identify and designate the backward groups that can benefit
Christianity itself has not meant the eradication of backwardness. Neither has conversion meant, certainly in India, an erasure of boundaries between old and new faiths or an inevitable transition from oppressive socio-religious (casteist) realities to healthier ones – as works by Gauri Viswanathan and Sebastian Kim have shown. Being a Christian and being marginal are not mutually exclusive. To the works of Selva Raj and Corinne Dempsey among others on these topics, we can also add the voices of Ruth Manorama, Monica J. Melanchthon, Godwin Shiri, and Mohan Larbeer, among many others.

The demographic make-up of congregations has impacted their theology and practices in the form of a noticeable rejection of Brahmanic ideas and concepts in Hindi Christian speech and acts. Unlike many early Christian theologians writing in English who sought to find common ground between their own pre-Christian high-caste backgrounds and elite Hindu interlocutors, Hindi Christian authors rejected Brahmanical forms of Christianity in favor of speech and vocabulary that created conceptual distance from those forms of Christianity. Similarly, vernaculars like Hindi started to occupy a larger role as the language of communication because from such reservations, successive Central and State Governments have appointed special Commissions under Article 340 of the Constitution. Along with various State commissions, all-India Commissions include the Kalelkar Commission (1953-55), the first of its kind, the B.P. Mandal Commission (1979-80), and the Mishra Commission on Religious and Linguistic Minorities (2004-07), which is the latest all-India effort to identify and designate SC, ST, and OBC communities.

2. Manorama, “Dalit Women: The Thrice Alienated.” Manorama has studied the exceptional impact of discrimination on the women of backward communities and has described such women as the “Dalits among the Dalits.” (In the context of the Indian churches, Dalit is usually used a synonym for ‘backward’.)

3. Melanchthon, “A Dalit Reading of Genesis 10-11:9.” Melanchthon is currently an associate professor of Old Testament at the University of Divinity in Australia. She formerly taught at Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, Chennai, and was a member of the Senate of Serampore College, Serampore. She has written extensively at the intersection of Dalit studies, gender, and biblical interpretation.

4. Shiri, The Plight of Christian Dalits. Shiri’s work has drawn attention to the reality of caste-discrimination within churches in India by shedding light on caste relations within Indian churches.

5. Larbeer, “The Story of the Dalits of India.” Larbeer’s work has reminded us of the continuing mistreatment of backward Christians as people who are still socially ostracized, subjected to violence, deprived of their rights, exploited for cheap labor, and denied justice and the equal protection of the State.
vernaculars – rather than English or Latin or Syriac – were the languages of choice for a growing number of Christian converts.

Third, recognition of their status as minority Christians in a multifaith context has led to particular forms of discourse and values. In one instance, Hindi Christians have sought to use Hindi in ways that help them identify themselves as both Hindi and Christian. As a result, they have mostly rejected avātār in favor of dehādhāran, yet have readily deployed polytradition ideas like mandir (a concept shared with Hindus), khudā and īmān (concepts shared with Muslims), and honorific language for their Lord (a cultural practice shared with both Hindus and Muslims). In another way, they have opposed attempts to identify Christianity with English by insisting that Christians must recognize that they are called to serve in Hindi, criticizing portrayals of Christians in mass media as Westerners, and questioning the association of Christianity with Urdu-inflected Hindi in Bāibal kī Kahāniyāṁ (more on these arguments later).

In a further sign of the weight given to the recognition that Hindi Christians witness as minority citizens of a multifaith nation, Hindi Christian texts have emphasized the importance of respectful evangelism, pluralistic attitudes, Christian contribution to public life, and the need to seek and build interfaith relations intentionally.

Though committed to the self-government and self-expression of Indian churches, some prominent Indian Christians, like Bishop V.S. Azariah, were reluctant supporters of India’s Independence movement due to their preference to be governed by British co-religionists rather than come under Hindu or Brahmin rule. Modern Hindi Christian authors, however, do not display any reluctance toward sharing governance with India’s Hindus (and for that matter, its

other citizens). Azariah’s context was of course quite different from that in which modern Hindi Christians find themselves: Independence was still on the horizon, the shape of Indian democracy was unclear, there was no guarantee that India would adopt a secular Constitution, nor could Azariah have envisioned the role interfaith relations would play in the public life of post-Independence India. Living under a secular Constitution in a nation captivated – and sometimes, it seems, besieged – by religious loyalties, Hindi Christians are trying to be Hindi, Indian, and Christian. This desire has manifested itself in a collection of attempts to curate a credible and recognizable Christian voice that wants to actively join and shape the nation’s life in perceptible ways.

Five such attempts have been discussed in the preceding chapters. First, we looked at debates concerning the use of *avātār* among Indian Christians and the development and use by Hindi Christian communities of the term *dehādhāraṇ* in contrast to the term *avātār*. Second, we paid attention to the role of discipleship in the formation of faith among Hindi Christian communities. Third, we explored a fight over the perceived dilution of the Hindi-ness of *Bāibal kī Kahāniyāṁ*. Fourth, we examined the social goals that Hindi Christians texts attach to good works. And, in our fifth example, we unpacked the insistence of Hindi Christian materials that Christian virtuous acts must serve wider communities and help shape the nation, as explored through the works of Benjamin Khan, Din Dayal, and Richard Howell. Understood in light of each other, these case-studies provide a collection of insights into the persistent commitment found in Hindi Christian literature to present a form of Christian witness that is credible and recognizable and active in very public ways.
Credible and Recognizable

Insights from the relationship of Hindi Christian literature to other Indian Christian writing and bhakti motifs are telling regarding the complex relationship between Hindi Christianity and its religious and cultural contexts. And the type of engagement between Hindi Christians and their religious and linguistic milieu that emerges in Hindi Christian literature demonstrates a search for Christian credibility. The assessment of Robin Boyd’s history of Indian Christian theology in Hindi Christian circles, which was discussed previously, is a case in point. The translation of Boyd’s study into Hindi was popular – it has already run in two editions and multiple prints, with the most recent print in 2004 producing 1100 copies (a considerable number for a Hindi Christian book) – and helped a generation of Hindi-language seminarians and Christians learn about the growth and development of Christian theology in India. Yet, embedded within C.W. David’s Hindi translation of Boyd’s work are clear hints at the unease of the Hindi Theological Literature Committee toward producing a book on Indian Christian theology that seemed to tie the Indian-ness of Christian theology in India too closely to Hindu worldviews in India – as if Christian theologizing in India was theology done primarily under the umbrella of Hindu worldviews.

While the Literature Committee found it important to offer Hindi Christians a history of Christian theologizing in India in Hindi, the fact that Christian engagements with Hindu concepts dominated the book inspired the Literature Committee to create distance between the merit in
making Boyd’s compendium available in Hindi and the merit in endorsing its Hindu-centric presentation of Christian theologizing in India. And so, David refused to call Boyd’s work a study of ‘Indian Christian theology’ – the title Boyd gave his work – and instead titled the Hindi version ‘Christian theology in India.’ It is helpful to note that at the time of producing this Hindi version, David was chief editor of Literature Committee and responsible for Hindi Christian works that would then reach bookstores and libraries and churches across the nation. Given David’s influence, the change he introduced was noteworthy. The subtle yet important change he introduced hinged on concerns with the perception of a ‘Hindu-ized’ Christianity that Boyd’s work could create among Hindi Christian readers. This unease with Christian claims in India that are dominated by or expressed in Hindu concepts was most clearly evident also in debates on the propriety of using *avātār* in Christian discourses.

Hindi Christian authors found problematic the readiness with which, in their estimation, many early Christian thinkers in India borrowed heavily from Hindu views of the world and tried to bridge the gap between the two faiths. Ideas like *sat, chit, ānand* (using the triune form of Brahma as an analogy for the Triune nature of God), the synonymity of the Hindu term *avātār* and the Christian notion of the incarnation of the Word, and an *advaitic* understanding of God’s relationship with the world (which led to a theology of *svamārg*, i.e., a believer was on a personal journey to find oneness with God) were popular and – maybe even dominant – among Christian theologizing in India. Boyd’s *Indian Christian Theology* (1976) and Khan’s *Major Christian Theologians of the Twentieth Century* (1990) were, after all, compilations in which examples of attempts by Indian Christian thinkers to bridge the distance between Western Christian thinkers and relatable Hindu concepts were prevalent. Hindi Christian leaders in India
resisted this choice to place Christian concepts in Hindu terms when they chose dehādhāraṇ over avātār to communicate one of the most-important and defining claims of Christianity.

Yet, such distinctions between Hindu concepts were not clear cut and the complexity of the relationship of Christian claims to Hindu expressions could be understood in multiple ways. It could, for instance, be understood in terms of the fluidity of ideas across religious boundaries in Christian communities – e.g., polytradition words existed along with exclusively Christian terms. It could be understood also in terms of the weight given to the concept being communicated – e.g., it was important to distinguish between Jesus and other incarnations because of what was at stake: the exclusive claim of Jesus on salvation. The use of a Hindu word like mandir in the Hindi Bible, however, was not a matter of great concern because not much was at stake when referring to the physical structure in which God was said to reside and be worshipped. Finally, it could be viewed in light of the value placed on recognizable boundaries in ‘formal’ venues like Hindi translations of the Bible (where dehādhāraṇ has been consistently used) and ‘informal’ venues like popular hymns (where we find avātār and polytradition terms) and self-published works (like Arya’s poems on the Gospel of Mark) where the authors and the users of their works were open to placing Christian and Hindu claims in synonymity with each other.

The use of dehādhāraṇ in conjunction with polytradition words like mandir points to another aspect of Hindi Christian claims: the insistence that Christianity in India be Christianity in Hindi. Hindi authorship by Christians in India emerged not only from missionary-era objectives but also from the desire of an increasingly Indianizing church to speak and use the language used by the vast majority of its members. To be a Christian did not mean to abandon or set aside one’s
cultural history and heritage. Hindi was a big part of this story. As a result, in the works of Hindi Christian writers we find a call for Christians in the region to use Hindi in their religious lives and worship.

Like the attempts in Hindi Christian texts to secure a Christian witness that is credible as both linguistically Hindi and theo-ethically Christian, the search for recognition as Christian by their neighbors of other faiths has also played out in a few noticeable ways. On the one hand, words like dehādhāran allowed Hindi Christians to communicate a vocabulary that was distinguishable from their Hindu neighbors and from other forms of Indian Christianity that in certain (Brahmanical) versions readily adopted Sanskrit terms and the philosophical worldviews of Hindu schools of thought to communicate Christian claims. This form of Christianity in India itself acquired its Brahmanical flavor as the result primarily of two complementary movements: the conversion of upper-caste elites in urban settings, many of whom were invested in a renaissance within Hinduism (like the Bengali Brahmin convert Brahmobandhab Upadhay [1861-1907]); and, the adoption of inculturation into Hindu ways of life, like ashrams and the philosophy of Vedanta, as expressed in the life and ministry of Catholic missionaries like de Nobili; Jules Monchanin and Henri Le Saux (who took the name Abhishiktananda), founders of the Saccidananda Ashram in 1950; the English Benedictine priest, Bede Griffiths (1906-93); and, Sara Grant, who led the Christa Prema Seva Ashram in Pune in the 1970s and onwards.7

7. See, for instance, the helpful summary of these dual movements within ‘vedantic’ Christianity in Ganeri, “Catholic Encounter with Hindus,” 415-18.
Such a ‘Hindu-ized’ or ‘Indianized’ or ‘swadeshi’ (or, native) Christianity, however, was not uncontested within Indian Christianity, e.g. among Hindi Christian scholarship. Hindi Christian arguments against *avātār* turned on the concept’s inability to properly mark-out the unique salvific person and work of Jesus Christ as compared to that of other *avātārs*. In the context of a Hindu worldview and Brahmanical Christian claims, Hindi Christians adopted *dehādhāraṇ* as a way to stand apart within that context. In other words, a term like *dehādhāraṇ* served to distinguish Hindi Christian vocabulary from (Hindu) *avātār* and from certain (Brahminical) forms of Indian Christianity. Hindi Christians, however, were not alone in doing so. The turn to *bhakti* and social concerns, and the turn away from Sanskritic thought, in Indian Christian circles, as exemplified in Dalit theology and *bhakti* theology, complemented the attitude of Hindi Christians.9

Yet, it is also important to recall that Hindi Christians writers sought recognition not only in their standing apart but also in their comfort with using religious terms in Hindi that were readily available to Christians and non-Christian alike, and in their attention to the cultural practices of their religious neighbors. In this vein, terms like *mandir* and other similar polytradition words allowed Hindi Christianity to remain connected with its surrounding religious milieu and vocabulary. Along with serving as connective tissues, polytradition concepts in Hindi Christian literature should also be seen as reflective of a desire to be grounded in Hindi. This desire is most visible in two ways. Hindi Christian guidebooks on communication, as we saw in the examples from Anand’s and Lall’s works, insisted that Christians communicate in Hindi and communicate

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9. As Ganeri writes of Catholic Christianity in India, “The Indian identity of the Catholic community is … neither solely that of Dalit culture nor Brahmanical Hindu culture.” (“Catholic Encounter with Hindus,” 426-27) This observation would also hold true for Protestant Christian thought in India.
in ways that accommodate the (equally real) claims of peoples of other faiths. Similarly, Hindi Christian authors sought to safeguard the association of Hindi with Christianity, and to project Christianity as a Hindi faith. It is in the context of this interest – that has played out against the backdrop of Hindu nationalists who want to preserve ‘India’s language,’ Hindi, exclusively for Hindus and who want to link India, Hindi, and Hindu seamlessly together (an area for further research discussed below) – that our understanding of Anand’s diagnosis of the failure of Bāibal kī Kahāniyāṁ (BKK) acquires more depth.

As the reaction of Hindi Christians to the failure of BKK suggests, in their estimation much blame could be assigned to the decision of the writers of BKK to dilute the Hindi-content of BKK. While it is also possible that falling ratings and bureaucratic controversies were equally responsible for the demise of BKK, it is telling that in the estimation of Hindi Christians BKK lost a large portion of its Christian audience – and consequently its run on Doordarshan – because Christians in India could not recognize the heavily Urdu-inflected language of BKK. As we have seen, Mankekar’s work seriously questions such claims by Hindi Christian scholars. Their assessment, however, makes sense in light of their attempts to make their faith recognizable as a faith grounded in Hindi. As expressed in Anand’s arguments, Christians must fight attempts to portray Christianity as a religion of the English language or of Urdu and should claim for themselves an identity as members of a ‘Hindi religion.’ In summary, then, a study of the role of dehādhāraṇ, the deployment of polytradition words, and Hindi Christian assessments of the failure of BKK helps us recognize that Hindi Christians have used the importance of using Hindi as a means to stake their Christian witness as one that is credibly and recognizably Christian and Hindi.
Public Christian Witness

It is further the case that for many widely-read Hindi Christian authors virtuous lives serve an intentional and particular type of public purpose. The Christian witness proposed in Hindi Christian texts comes in the form of a witness that is both necessary and necessarily public in nature. As discussed in chapter five, Hindi Christian authors have routinely employed terms like kartavy (duty),\textsuperscript{10} dāyītv or uttardāyītv (obligation or liability),\textsuperscript{11} jimmādāri (responsibility),\textsuperscript{12} bhūmikā (role),\textsuperscript{13} and āvaśyak (necessary)\textsuperscript{14} to communicate a robust sense of responsibility to witness in public that is incumbent on those who follow Christ. It is no accident, then, that this necessary, public aspect of Christian witness is prominent in texts on ethics that seek to explain and provide practical guidelines for a virtuous life in the wider religious and social environments in which Christians in central and northern India find themselves. In Hindi Christian texts, Christian discipleship is a necessary feature of accepting Christ; this argument is rather commonplace in Christian literature, both within and outside India. Hindi Christian texts, however, claim a further role that is incumbent on Christian communities that exist and preach in a language that is shared by the vast majority of their (non-Christian) neighbors. In addition to being a disciple, a disciple should also be a disciple in public ways. For many Hindi Christian scholars, an attention to Christian discipleship is accompanied by an insistence that such discipleship face outwards towards people of other faiths.

\textsuperscript{10} In the works of Dayal, James, Khan, and Howell.
\textsuperscript{11} In the works of Jonathan and Khan.
\textsuperscript{12} In the works of James and Howell.
\textsuperscript{13} In the works of Howell.
\textsuperscript{14} In the works of Anand, Dayal, Howell, James, Khan, Lall, and Paul discussed above.
The reasons behind such a type of public witness can be grouped into three general areas. First, calls for the public nature of Hindi Christian witness reflect the fact that Hindi Christians are called to use Hindi, a language they share with neighbors of other faiths. Second, commentaries on public engagement reflect the social and religious location of (Hindi) Christians in India as Christians in a pluralist context dominated by non-Christian neighbors. From this perspective, interfaith relations and dialogue matter even as Christians continue to evangelize and preach the gospel through their witness. Third, the desire for Christian participation in democracy and public governance has inspired a lot of Hindi Christians discourse on the public nature of Christian witness in India. But, how have these objectives inspired and shaped the call for public witness in Hindi Christian texts?

The commitment to use Hindi impacted and shaped Hindi Christian arguments in certain ways. This is especially so when Hindi Christian writers argued why Indian Christians should focus on Hindi as their language rather than use other languages. Such arguments were not, as the evidence from Hindi Christian commentary on the *Bāibal kī Kahāniyāṁ* suggests, nationalistic in nature. After all, Hindi Christian authors did not argue that Christians throughout the nation should use Hindi. Such broad claims are noticeably absent in Hindi Christian literature. Rather, authors like John Anand were wary of the neglect of Hindi and of attempts to separate it from Christianity. As Anand cautioned, when Christians in India use ‘non-Indian’ components of cultures (for instance, a language like English) they place themselves in Trishanku’s position – neither here nor there. In similar vein, the image of a cassock-wearing Catholic priest did not, in Anand’s view, appropriately represent Indian Christianity. For Anand, the same could be said

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15. See Anand’s quotation on page 150 above. Anand’s caricature of Indian Catholics as culturally foreign is, demonstrably, unfair and unmeasured. Catholics in India, like their Syrian Orthodox co-religionists in southern
of a form of Hindi heavily inflected with Urdu vocabulary. In Anand’s metaphor, then, being stuck in the middle of “here” [i.e., Hindi and Indian culture] and “there” [English and Western garb] was not good and, implicit in the metaphor, Hindi Christians were asked to remain “here” (the preferred option) or “there” rather than remain stuck in the middle.

Second, using Hindi meant recognizing both the mutual intelligibility afforded by the strategy and the gaps it revealed. Mutual intelligibility as a tactic emerged in the ready adoption of and comfort with polytradition words in Hindi Christian texts like the Hindi Bible, hymns, songs, poetry, and sermons, to name a few forms of Christian discourse. Polytradition words were not the only expression of the search for mutual intelligibility. The transition in Hindi Bible translations from non-honorific to honorific addresses for Jesus Christ stemmed from a similar desire to acquire cultural parity with Hindu expressions in other faiths. As John Anand explains, India, have had a longer history of assimilative thought and practices than their Protestant kin. Further, Indian Catholics have proposed ideas and concepts, like param-prasād, that are mobile across religious borders. At the same time, as I can attest from my experiences while working with Catholic leaders when I served with the National Council of Churches in India, Catholic institutions in India, including Catholic seminaries, research centers, and the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India, have regularly supported creative developments in interfaith relations, theologies, and practices in India. Further, the vocabularies, practices, and vestments of mainline Protestant liturgy have also drawn inspiration from and followed the traditions of Christian liturgical practices outside India. In light of these facts, it is appropriate to seriously question Anand’s (negative) portrayal of Catholic Christianity in India. Yet, it is also important to note that Anand’s comment was not so much a denial of the Indianness of Catholics in India but more a comment on Christian portrayals in forums of mass media like films. Indian Catholics, of course, do not control how Bollywood has portrayed them. Further, they have been mostly on the sidelines when Bollywood has chosen Indian Catholics to stand in for Indian Christians at large. Nuanced and balanced portrayals of Christianity have not been, I would argue, the forte of Hindi films. It is, therefore, in the context of mass media portrayals of Christianity in India that Anand’s comments should be understood. His comments on Catholic priests (or, more to Anand’s point, Roman Catholic priests) are not a critique of Catholic Christianity in India per se but of the predominant way in which Indian Christians have been portrayed in Hindi films. On a related note, portrayals of Indian Christians in Hindi films – and, other mass media like Television – constitute interesting subjects for further study. Robinson, in Christians Meeting Hindus (page 96, note 16), mentions a few such studies: T.K. Thomas, “The Christian Image in Hindi Films,” National Council of Churches Review, No. 93 (1973), and R. D. Singh, “Image of Christian Community in India,” National Council of Churches Review, No. 93 (1973). More recent studies include Pankaj Jain’s 2009 “From Kil-Arni to Anthony: The Portrayal of Christians in Indian Films,” which was published in Visual Anthropology. Jain concludes his somewhat brief study with a rather positive observation that in Indian films, “Christians are rarely, if at all, singled out for criticism” (Jain, “From Kil-Arni to Anthony,” 17). Jain’s work is revelatory in another way: the vast majority of Christian characters found in Hindi films are Roman Catholic characters.
We [and this is a royal ‘we’] want to make a personal request of you [the readers] that when [old editions of] these books were published, in those days the editor of the Ādhyātmik Śiksā Mālā [the Spiritual Instruction Series] and Christian authors had not paid attention to important issues like language and culture and for the founder of the Christian faith Lord Jesus, and [for] Christian religious teachers, prophets, apostles and the like, they did not use honorific pronouns appropriate for Indian culture, due to which even today in church uncultured [or crude or impolite] forms of address like ‘Jesus calls,’ ‘Jesus says’ [the original Hindi is non-honorific] are in use.

A few things are noteworthy about Anand’s request. First, as editor-in-chief of the Hindi Theological Literature Committee over the last two decades, Anand has attached this request to many Hindi Christian works published by the Committee. One can find this request as a preface to many new editions of pre-1980s texts. Most texts after the 1980s lack such a note. While I have not traced in detail the timeline of the shift to honorific texts, it seems clear that Hindi Christian publications over the last three decades have paid persistent attention to ways in which Hindi Christian works can (or cannot) be recognized as (culturally) Indian – by which I mean a degree of cultural parity between Hindi Christian and other (in this case, mostly Hindu) forms of religious speech. Presumably, modern editors and writers, in contrast to their predecessors, have caught on to the importance of cultural parity.

Further, it seems to be the case that cultural sensitivity has found a place in texts and literature more than it has in quotidian Christian speech and church practices. Hence, Anand could bemoan (in 2009) the continued use of non-honorific speech in churches. There is, Anand’s note suggests, a lag between adoptions of honorific speech in Christian literature and in church

practices. This lag is especially conspicuous in light of the fact that, as demonstrated above, the Hindi Bible of 1988-89 had already adopted honorific language. At least since 1989, then, Christians have used a Hindi Bible with honorific religious speech. Yet, 20 years later, that speech pattern has, at least according to the Hindi Theological Literature Committee, failed to eradicate “uncultured” or crude forms of address for Jesus in church life.

Mutual intelligibility was not the only outcome of writing in Hindi. Using Hindi also led Hindi Christians to face the limits of mutual intelligibility. They found that gaps may arise when trying to use a language that is deeply part of other faith traditions. One such gap emerged around the use of *avātār* to speak of the Christian notion of God’s incarnation. Even though Hindu religious literature in the region, and nineteenth- and twentieth-century Indian Christian discourses, were replete with the idea and its use, Hindi Christian authors rejected *avātār* and (nearly exclusively) adopted *dehādhāran* to communicate the Christian idea of God’s incarnation. Unlike English Christian Indian authors who found similarities between Christ and Buddha or Christ and Krishna (Mohammed), Hindi Christian authors insisted that Christ is unique and not like those saviors. In doing so, Hindi Christian theologians followed in the footsteps of those missionaries and scholars and teachers who cautioned against conflating other saviors (like Krishna and Buddha) with Christ.

Linguistic code-sharing with Hindu and Muslim neighbors was not the only impetus among Hindi Christians to recognize their relations with people of other faiths. They were also

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18. As I discuss later in the context of the work of Christopher King, the relation of Hindi to Hinduism is complex. While more has been said below, here it is sufficient to note that Hindi-speaking Christians share that language with participants in other faiths and traditions.

motivated by the recognition of their particular location as Christians in a secular and pluralist democracy. Put differently, *interfaith relations mattered*. A commitment to being Christian in ways that are recognizably Christian to people of other faiths went hand-in-hand with the acknowledgement that Christian witness should not undermine interfaith relations. So, for instance, Dayal attended to the public posture of Christianity and the impact of Christian speech and acts on public relations. Similarly, Howell (a la Lall) asked Indian Christians to evangelize in ways that built relations and did not denigrate the beliefs of people of other faiths. Linguistic code-sharing, in an interesting way, attuned Christians to interfaith relations. An interest in how Christians communicated and what they communicated was accompanied by an interest in what that communication bore and how a Christian could communicate in relational ways. Howell’s emphasis on a relational form of evangelism symbolized the impact of the concern for interfaith relations on the form and content of Hindi Christian texts.

Other prominent works discussed previously that draw our attention to the role of interfaith relations have been Khan’s *Khristīy Nītiśāstr* and Dayal’s *Masīhī Dharm Vijñān kā Paricay*. In Khan’s ethics, as in his subsequent works, interfaith dialogue acquired prime place as an expression of Christian service. More importantly, Christian witness acquired its public profile because, for Khan, interfaith dialogue was the necessary precursor to interfaith relations, which were the special goal of Christian theo-ethics in India. Dayal echoed this theme and argued for the public nature of Christian witness on the ground that interfaith relations were a necessary outcome of Christian theology for three reasons: Christ calls his disciples to shape the societies in which they find themselves rather than to seclude themselves from public affairs; God’s placement of Christians in India is a call to engage people of other faiths; and, finally, God’s way
of self-revelation, which includes God’s self-revelation to people of other faiths, makes interfaith engagements by Christians (theologically) inevitable.

Finally, the commitment to use Hindi and to interfaith relations was accompanied by a commitment to public service and participation in public affairs. In light of the previous two commitments, it is not hard to see why Hindi Christian scholars have favored influential roles in public affairs. Social management is not the sole purview of the secular. How can this be so, in a context infused with religion anyway? As Khan has argued, India is not an a-religious nation. Indian Christians are, as a result, called to be citizens and participants and shapers of politics in the context of public spaces that are infused with the values and claims of many religious communities. As Khan reminds his readers, for Christians to abdicate their civil duties would be to have “failed to make Christian values influential [in public life].”

In line with Khan’s and Dayal’s commentary on public service, the guidebooks of James, Paul, Anand, and Lall also present Christian discipleship in ways that press it into the service of larger social goals. As discussed in chapter four, Hindi Christian guidebooks not only are replete with insights on proper discipleship but also tie that discipleship inseparably to the responsibility to be disciples in public ways and shape public life. As James puts it, a Christian “is responsible to her family, her society, [and] to her nation.” And, where Anand and Lall invite their readers to build relations between Christians and non-Christians, and where Lall and Howell propose strategies for relational evangelism, the works of James, Paul, and Khan invite their readers to attend to their role as Indians in the management of public affairs and social development.

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21. James, Mahilā Dharmāvijñān, 108. For a full translation and list of public responsibilities, see pages 162-63 above.
It is, then, clear from the evidence that the claim that Christian witness should be necessarily public arose from a combination of factors. The use of Hindi allowed code-sharing with people of other faiths. Such code-sharing complemented context-inspired ethics and theologies that demonstrated a necessary Christian commitment to interfaith relations. And, the relationship between language, ethics, and context ensured that Christian speech was not separated from Christian acts, whether at the individual, communal, or political levels.

**AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

By their very nature, early works on new topics invite scholars to engage in further research, to take the research in new directions, to test claims, and to explore the ways in which such studies can relate to larger conversations. Original works, in other words, are both fecund and inviting.

Benjamin Khan is instructive in this regard. In the forward to his pioneering work on twentieth-century Christian theologians – the first of its kind in Hindi – he writes,

> In first attempts, there always remain some deficits and defects. [It is my hope that] readers and critics will look beyond these deficits and defects and will benefit from the materials that are the warp and woof of this book. It is also incumbent on critics and readers to convey the deficits and defects of the book to the author so that the author may correct them in the second edition.22

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22. Khan, *Bīsvīṁ Šatābdī ke Pramukh Dharmāvijñānī*, xi: Pratham prayāś mein sadaiv kuch kamīyāṁ, aur truṭīyāṁ rah jāī haiṁ. Pāṭhak evam ālocak in kamīyoṁ aur truṭīyoṁ ko najarandāj karte huye us sāmagrī se lābh uphāyenge jo is pustak kā tānā bāṅā hai. Ālocākoṁ aur pāṭhakoṁ kā yah bhi kartavy hotā hai ki pustak kī kamīyoṁ aur truṭīyoṁ ko lekhak tak pahumicāvem tākī vah dvitiyā sanskaraṁ meṁ in ko dār kar sake. McGregor (in *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*, 448) suggests “warp and woof” for tānā bāṅā, which, I believe, accurately captures the intent of the phrase, which is to point a reader to the ‘heart of the matter.’

Khan used his preface to open a conversation on Christian theologies in India. I have found his comments helpful because they can also serve as an invitation to open a conversation on Hindi Christian literature in India. I am particularly attracted to his recognition of the communal and continuing nature of scholarship because, I believe, there are many historical and contemporary topics that scholars can explore with the help of Hindi Christian texts. Borne out of my interests and ongoing research, in what follows I have identified a selection of those topics.
It is apropos of Khan’s observation to take some time to turn our gaze outward and to look beyond the scope of this dissertation upon topics – some of which I expect to tackle in the years ahead – that, in their great richness, not only invite further scholarship but whose study will also enrich our understanding of Hindi Christian literature in modern India. A hitherto unengaged family of texts like Hindi Christian literature offers scholars of Christianity in India a rich source of data to study a range of issues, like the relationships between classical or learned and popular or lived religion, between language, religion, and nationalism, between different forms of (Catholic and Protestant, and colonial and post-colonial) Christianity in India, and between religious literature and social identity in modern India. I would like to highlight five such issues to conclude this dissertation.

The first issue concerns the way in which debates in Hindi Christian literature challenge attempts by Hindu nationalists to hoard Hindi for Hindus. To understand these attempts, it is useful to return to the excellent study of King (One Language, Two Scripts) that we encountered in the second chapter. King traces the origin of the Hindi movement of the nineteenth century to the early 1860s as a movement that sought to express a form of Hindu nationalism “whose essence lay in the denial of existing assimilation to cultural traditions associated with Muslim rule and the affirmation of potential differentiation from these traditions.”23 Denying assimilations and affirming differences between Hindi and Urdu were central to a strategy that aimed to mark-out Hindi as the language distinctively of the Hindus and Urdu as distinctively that of the Muslims. Urdu-loving Hindus and Hindi-loving Muslims – not to mention the general ease with which these languages co-existed in central and northern India, and especially in Uttar Pradesh (the research field for King’s study) – were ignored, marginalized, and opposed on grounds that such

23. King, One Language, Two Scripts, 15.
attitudes displayed divided loyalties. Cultural and emotional attitudes within the Hindi movement “led to its anti-Muslim aspects” and to look to the glory of Hindi literature was to look to those periods of Hindu rule in which “Muslims acted as invaders and villains.” In other words, King writes, “to revive Hindi literature meant to revive the communal rivalries expressed therein,” rivalries that could be mapped on to languages only when Hindi and Urdu could be marked-out, respectively and exclusively, for Hindus and Muslims.

According to King’s theory of Hindi-Urdu relations, nuance was opposed and assimilation was the enemy. Where early nineteenth-century literature in “Hindee” (Hindi) and “Hindoostanee” (Urdu) presented itself as two forms of Khari Boli whose less formal forms “approach[ed] complete mutual intelligibility” when spoken, by the latter half of the nineteenth century the division between Urdu and Hindi literature had blossomed into debates on mutual exclusivity and on whether Urdu and Hindi, rather than Urdu-Hindu, should be accorded status as the language of government and public affairs. Hindi’s advocates attacked Urdu as “foreign,” its

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24. King, One Language, Two Scripts, 16.
26. The former inflected with Sanskrit words and the latter with Persian and Arabic ones (King, One Language, Two Scripts, 26-27).
27. King, One Language, Two Scripts, 8.
28. When written, Hindi and Urdu use strikingly different scripts. The Urdu script is a modified version of the Persian script, which is itself a modified version of the Arabic script. It is written from right to left with curves, loops, dotted accents, and in long connecting lines. The Hindi script is a Nagari or Devanagari script written from left to right, in blocks of characters hanging below blocks of separate lines that string the character into words, with looping, dotted, and curved accents both above the lines and below them. These different scripts reflect connections to languages of different religions. As King notes, “the Sanskrit texts of Hinduism appear in Nagari, while most versions of the Koran use the Arabic script.” This relation of script to religion further reinforces the relation of language to religion (King, One Language, Two Scripts, 9).

The (general) mutual intelligibility of Hindi and Urdu in speech and unintelligibility in script is apparent to any speaker of Hindi who cannot read the Urdu script. As I can attest from personal experience, travelling around Pakistan with basic Urdu-reading abilities meant I could quite easily converse with Pakistanis across the nation but would get stuck when trying to read Pakistani newspapers and other materials in Urdu.
script “illegible and ambiguous.” Urdu’s advocates attacked Hindi as “unstandardized and poor in technical and scientific vocabulary,” its Nagari script “slow and clumsy.”

Beyond these ‘technical’ claims based on script and precision, however, an emotional and nativist claim dominated and “reappeared ad nauseam: the good of the Hindu majority required the introduction of Hindi [for official purposes in the North West Provinces, modern-day Uttar Pradesh] even if the Muslim minority should suffer from the change.” Proponents of Hindi won their battle with the introduction in 1900 of Hindi as a language on par with Urdu by the Government of the North Western Provinces and Oudh and further prevailed when Uttar Pradesh adopted Hindi as its official language in 1947. Two forces combined to accomplish this state of affairs.

On the one hand, the incompatibility of the Hindi and Urdu script became a potent vehicle to ignore and sideline the compatibility of their vocabularies. While writers could use Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit words – as we saw in the case of BKK above – and speakers of the languages could be, to a considerable extent, mutually intelligible, a writer could not write in mixed Urdu and Nagari scripts. The fusing of “language, script, and religion,” in other words, made it easier to differentiate Hindi from Urdu and align Hindi distinctively with the interests of Hindus and Urdu with the interests of Muslims.

On the other hand, the separation between Hindi and Urdu took on a nationalist flavor. Not only were these languages practically incompatible and represented the interests of different religious

29. King, One Language, Two Scripts, 129.
groups, they also connoted different types of relationship with the nation writ large. Earlier
where Hindi = Hindu + Muslim,\(^{32}\) for Hindu nationalists their Aryan culture was at stake and tied
to the fate of Hindi.\(^{33}\) Many arguments were put forward in this regard by different organizations
out to promote and ‘protect’ Hindi: Hindi was not only a vernacular, but apart from Sanskrit, the
only medium through which people at large – read, the (Hindu) majority in India – could be
instructed in their social and religious duties (so claimed the Satya Dharmavolambini Sabha, or
the Society for Supporting the True Religion, founded in 1878 in Aligarh);\(^{34}\) Hindi had a positive
moral influence on people, while Urdu enticed people to dissolve and immoral lives (Hardoi
Union Club, in Allahabad);\(^{35}\) to continue to use Urdu as the court’s language was to perpetuate
Muslim tyranny in India (Babu Bireswar Mittra, in a petition to the High Court of the North
Western Provinces);\(^{36}\) and, Nagari or Hindu was virtuous and moral but Urdu was immoral and a
source of vice for the masses.\(^{37}\)

The religious and nationalistic allegiance to Hindi promoted by the Hindi movement of the
nineteenth century is aptly captured in the views ascribed by King to Shyam Sunder Das based

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\(^{32}\) And many supporters of Urdu argued that it was a joint product of Hindus and Muslims. (King, \textit{One Language, Two Scripts}, 29)  
\(^{33}\) In 1868, for instance, Babu Shiva Prasad, a prominent official in the Government of the North Western Provinces and Oudh wrote a memorandum in favor of making Hindi the official language in which he explained the threat of Urdu to Hindu culture: “The Persian [in this context, including Urdu or ‘semi-Persian’] of our day is half Arabic; and I cannot see the wisdom of the policy which thrusts a Semitic element into the bosoms of Hindus and alienates them from their Aryan speech [i.e., Hindi]; not only speech, but all that is Aryan; because through speech ideas are formed, and through ideas the manners and customs. To read Persian is to become Persianized, all our ideas become corrupt and our nationality is lost. Cursed be the day which saw the Muhammadans cross the Indus; all the evils which we find amongst us we are indebted for to our ‘beloved brethren’ the Muhammadans.” (King, \textit{One Language, Two Scripts}, 131; explanations in boxed brackets and emphasis are King’s). Prasad strongly blamed the British for forcing a foreign language on the (Hindu) masses.  
\(^{34}\) King, \textit{One Language, Two Scripts}, 134.  
\(^{35}\) King, \textit{One Language, Two Scripts}, 134.  
\(^{36}\) King, \textit{One Language, Two Scripts}, 134.  
\(^{37}\) King, \textit{One Language, Two Scripts}, 137.
on the latter’s biography. For Das, King writes, “Hindustani could never embody the common religious and cultural heritage of the Hindus of India [and as the Hindus were the majority in India, Hindu values were India’s values], because this style replaced Sanskrit words with Urdu words, striking a mortal blow at the very root of Hindi.” Put differently, advocates of Hindi sought not only to distinguish their language from Urdu but further to purify or cleanse their language of Urdu and Persian-Arabic content. This process led to certain linguistic transformations. First, Hindi and Urdu were split into branches from the “common trunk” of Khari Boli. Then, proponents of each language sought to further purify their branch. From Hindi, śuddh or highly Sanskritized Hindi emerged. From Urdu, Persianized Urdu emerged. This process culminated in “slogans such as ‘Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan’ whose creators saw no room for non-Hindi speakers and non-Hindus in Hindustan.” The process had reached its goal: what King called, the ‘Sanskritization of Urdu’ or the ‘Sanskritization of Khari Boli.’ It is against this backdrop of attempts at differentiation and purification in Hindi-Urdu debates that a study of Hindi Christian literature can make valuable interventions.

King is right to demonstrate that the alignments Hindi = Hindu and Urdu = Muslims are rather recent and have religious, political, and nationalist antecedents. Such alignments, however, were

38. Das was the most influential of the three founders of the Nagari Pracharini Sabha (the Society for the Promulgation of Nagari), the preeminent organization promoting Hindi over Urdu in the nineteenth century and rightly credited as one of the most influential organizations in the Hindi movement. Founded in Banaras in 1893, the Sabha used its strategic location to champion links between Hindi, Hinduism, and the nation. Banaras, long renowned for its Sanskrit heritage, was also a center for Hindi literature by the nineteenth century. It was also one of the holiest sites in Hinduism, attracting thousands of Hindus every year from all over the nation to banks of the Ganges and to its thousands of temples. These pilgrims spoke different languages – Bengali, Tamil, Gujarati, Nepali, Punjabi, among others – and found themselves in contact with the varied Hindi dialects in the city. The Sabha capitalized substantially and strategically on these interactions and on the flow of people through Banaras to spread the gospel of Hindi and Hindu throughout the region and the nation. (King, One Language, Two Scripts, 139-42).
40. King, One Language, Two Scripts, 175.
41. King, One Language, Two Scripts, 177.
42. King, One Language, Two Scripts, 177.
43. King, One Language, Two Scripts, 177.
not isolated to those between Hindi and Urdu and between Hindus and Muslims. To the best of my knowledge, no studies exist that examine the attempts by twentieth-century Hindu nationalists to create English = Christian, though it is clear from the works of Hindi Christian scholars like John Anand and Benjamin Khan that their use of Hindi was, in considerable part, a response to notions that Indian Christians are ‘foreign’ and not ‘Indian.’ For Hindi advocates of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Urdu was “foreign” and = Muslim. For Hindu nationalists in modern India, English is foreign and = Christian. Hindu nationalism in India has been vigorous and potent in trying to align the loyalties and cultures of Indian Christians with foreign nations and cultures (whether Roman (Catholic), Syrian (Orthodox) or Western (Protestant)). Some studies – like Chad Bauman’s discussed next – have explained the fusing of Pentecostal-Evangelical Christians in India with foreign interests. But his work does not address the claims of Hindu nationalists regarding Protestant Christians. Further, no studies that I know, including Bauman’s, address the linguistic alignment in Hindu nationalist discourse of (what is considered a foreign language of the colonizers and the West like) English with Christians in India.

A study of Hindi Christian literature further reminds us of the response of Indian Christians to Hindu attempts at such linguistic alignments. They offer insights into the responses by Indian Christians in Hindi to public portrayals of Christians as “foreign.” A study of Christian writings in Hindi, compared to studying those in English, offers a unique perspective into the relationships of language, script, and religion that go beyond studies of theology, ritual, and

44. As we saw earlier, Lall writes that Christianity was accused of being “destructive of culture” (where the reference to culture is to the dominant Hindu culture). In response, Anand invites his readers to promote Hindi Christian literature and become proficient in Hindi as the language of Christianity. Similarly, Khan has asked his readers to use Hindi as “our” language.

45. While Bauman has studied the relation of violence to such portrayals, his work does not pay sufficient attention to the response offered by Indian Christians to such portrayals.
culture. Rather than focusing on assimilations and differentiations in matters of theology and
culture – e.g., by asking whether Indian Christianity is ‘incultured’ or whether its inculturation is
‘Brahmanical’ or ‘plebian’ in nature – Hindi Christian writings allow us to get at the issue of
language itself in debates on the ‘nativeness of Indian Christianity.’ As we have discussed above,
Hindi Christian authors have championed Hindi not simply as a convenient vernacular but as the
language of their (cultural) identity and (recognizable) rootedness in India. They have
championed Hindi as a language of Christianity in India.

The second issue concerns the relationship of Hindi Christian literature to Indian Christian
literature at large. This is relevant in two ways. First, there is the matter of the ways in which
Hindi Christianity can be compared to other forms of Indian Christianity like those found in
Indian Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Evangelical, Pentecostal, and independent church
communities. Second, there is the matter of the ways in which the Protestant writings in Hindi I
have studied compare to and relate with other Christian literature in Hindi. As mentioned in
chapter one, I have identified “Hindi Christian” in terms primarily of mainline, Protestant church
bodies in India. But many other traditions of Christianity exist and produce scholarship in the
Hindi-speaking regions of India.

One could, for instance, study the relationship between Hindi Christian texts and Roman
Catholic works. In this area, two topics of study are most conspicuous in the context of the
subjects I have covered in this dissertation. First, there is, quite understandably, substantial work
in Catholic circles on the benefits and limits of avātār in Christian theology. These include not
only the works of Catholic missionaries and scholars in India – like Roberto de Nobili, Michael
Amaladoss, and Francis X. d’Sa – but also those of a wide range of scholars of Hinduism from a Catholic perspective – like Raimundo Panikker\(^{46}\) and Francis X. Clooney\(^{47}\) – and of scholars writing on the relationship between avātār and incarnation from other Christian perspectives – like Steven Tsoukalas in *Krṣṇa and Christ* (2006). We could also study the ways in which Hindi Protestant Christians and Hindi Catholic Christians have made different translation choices. One such difference was highlighted earlier in translations of the ‘Eucharist’ or ‘Last Supper’ into Hindi. As explored in chapter two, Protestants have used *prabhu-bhoj* while *param-prasād* is common in Catholic circles. Which claims are being made with these translations? What are the theological, cultural, and communicative antecedents that have shaped these choices? Are there different theologies of religions at play? Such questions offer exciting areas for further research.

The *third issue* relates to the reception of the Hindi Christian witness in modern India. Put differently, has the attention to a distinct, credible, and public witness that I have identified in Hindi Christian literature borne fruit? While this dissertation has examined the form of Christian witness prevalent in Hindi Christian literature, it has not examined the ways in which this witness has succeeded or failed in being credible, recognizable, and public in modern India. There are many ways in which this topic can be explored. From one perspective, we could analyze the impact this witness has had in promoting interfaith relations. From the perspective of insiders and outsiders, is Christian speech in Hindi recognizably Christian? For instance, does the word *dehādhāraṇ* evoke ‘Christian’ in non-Christian contexts? Further, from these etic and emic perspectives, has the use of Hindi led to better interfaith relations in identifiable communities or contexts – which is one of the stated goals in such literature?

\(^{46}\) E.g., in *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (1964).

Chad Bauman’s study of anti-Christian violence against Pentecostals in India suggests Hindu-Christian relations are, at least in the case of Pentecostals in India, strained. He acknowledges that, comparatively speaking, less violence is directed at mainline Protestants. Based on my field research among Hindi Christian communities, I find this observation partly accurate. Many Hindi Christian communities face little persistent violence and when violence flares it is usually on complex grounds – localized conflicts, caste-based hostilities, or against overtly evangelical pastors who aggressively seek converts. At the same time, Hindi Christian mainline communities in central and north India, along with Catholic ones, have faced enormous pressure and targeted violence from local Hindu forces. My conversations with Hindi Christians have regularly led to observations by my interlocutors that localized restrictions on Christian activities and hostilities against Christians – both overtly violent and more subtle – have been regularly instigated, carried out, and promoted by local Hindu groups and governments associated with the Bharatiya Janata Party, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, and the Vishva Hindu Parishad.

An evangelical zeal is, Bauman rightly suggests, not the sole province of Pentecostals or Evangelical churches in India. Many independent mission agencies – like Gospel for Asia in India – are also interested in expanding their reach and many mainline churches – like the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh and the Church of North India – are also engaged in planting new churches. The extent then to which Hindi Christians have been able to improve their public profile and interfaith relationships – whether reflected in improved relations or in the degree of hostilities directed at them – has not been examined in my study of Hindi Christianity in India.
Bauman’s study of Pentecostals is also a reminder of a fourth way in which further research can strengthen our understanding of Hindi Christian literature in India. This dissertation has limited itself to the literature of mainline Protestant churches and has not engaged the vast range of materials in Hindi produced by ‘newer’ Christian communities like charismatic churches and the numerous interdenominational and independent mission agencies active in the region. Bauman reports, for instance, that of the 800 American Protestant mission agencies surveyed by the *Mission Handbook* in 2008, 185 reported operations in India (second only to Mexico by a very small margin). India also has the third-largest number of domestic and foreign missionaries in the world according to *Operation World*, a document that tracks missionary deployment. Of the 82,950 missionaries in India in 2010, most are deployed domestically within India. Then there are the missionaries from Korea who have started to make their place in India. Many of these churches, missionaries, and mission agencies are active in Hindi-speaking regions and are responsible for a variety of materials like tracts, books, sermons, hymns, audio CDs, Christian videos, MP3s, and Christian broadcasts. In other words, a substantial amount of ‘non-mainline’ Christian materials in Hindi exists that has not been addressed in this dissertation.

A fifth issue concerns the extent to which a focus on texts and literature can adequately claim to capture the views of the communities from which such materials have emerged. I have limited this dissertation to a study of claims in literature and have kept to a minimum the results of my fieldwork in the form of observations and interviews. This is partly because as I delved more into the works of Hindi Christian authors I realized the scope of the work at hand. Consequently, the many ways in which the gap between what Hindi Christian authors have expressed and what

50. See also Bauman, *Pentecostals*, 37.
Hindi-speaking Christians have done has been unexamined so far. Put differently, have the authors and their readers ‘walked the talk’? Have Hindi Christian communities adopted intentional public profiles? Have they engaged in internal debates on the merits or demerits of polytradition words or the fusion of Hindi with Christianity? Have they done so in communities of worship and practice, or have such debates been limited to academic books and scholarly fora?

It is safe to claim that Hindi Christian scholarship is deeply rooted in communities of Indian Christians. The need to use dehādhāraṇ, for instance, is evident in the context of the desire within Christian communities to say something unique about the incarnation of God. Or, as Anand writes, the need to transition from non-honorific to honorific references in the Hindi Bible was born of the desire among Christians to accord their Lord, Jesus, the same dignity and respect that their Hindu neighbors accorded their gods and lords. Yet, it is also the case – and this is especially so in the case of Hindi ethical guidebooks – that the impact of Hindi Christian texts on its readers is yet unexplored.

Such a study of the impact of texts is further complicated by the social context in which such texts have emerged and continue to function. While I have tried to use both academic texts – like the textbooks of Khan and Dayal – and popular works of ‘lived religion’ – like the poetry of Arya and widely-used hymnbooks – a focus on texts, by its very nature, limits this study to the views of literate Hindi Christians. However, in light of the fact that a large proportion of Hindi Christians come from marginalized backgrounds, examinations of the effects of texts on such

51. See, for instance, Tharamangalam, “Whose Swadeshi?” 235. Tharamanglam puts the number of Indian Christians who come from Dalit and tribal origins at 72% (in 1996). While he does not measure the proportion of
communities will need to be grounded in an understanding of the literacy levels in such communities. The matter of access to such texts necessitates another layer of analysis. Textbooks, after all, are not commonly available and are more likely to be found in church offices, scholarly collections, and seminary libraries. I have tried to mitigate the detrimental effects of low literacy rates and limited access by including in my analysis accessible works and materials like self-published poems, popular hymns, and sermons and short stories that are sung and heard rather than necessarily read and studied.

**TRISHANKU, CHRISTIANS IN FILMS, AND THE TALE OF TWO MEETINGS**

On a Sunday morning in January 1794, around six months after he had reached Calcutta in modern West Bengal, the Baptist missionary William Carey and his local assistant or *munshi* walked into Manicktullo Bāzār, a marketplace, and started speaking to a large local congregation made up mostly of Muslims. As Carey notes in the journal he was keeping at the time,52 “Our Congregation consisted principally of Mahometans, and has increased every Lord’s Day;53 they are very inquisitive; and we have addressed them upon the subject of the Gospel with the greatest freedom.”54 During the course of their conversation they discussed some topics, but none

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52. All quotes, unless noted otherwise, are from the original copy of William Carey’s Journal held under copyright by and at the Angus Library, Regent’s Park College, University of Oxford. Quotations are used with the kind permission of the Angus Library and Archive, Regent’s Park College.

53. It is unclear to me whether “Congregation” referred to a group of Christian converts or interested Muslims or some combination of the two. At the very least, the Journal entry does make it clear that Carey had found in the Bāzār an eager Muslim audience that was growing every Sunday.


A note on the Journal’s front page reads: “A Journal kept by Mr Carey from June 1793 (the time of his leaving Europe) to June 1975, with a Letter to Mr. Pearce in Oct. 1795.”
occupied more time than comparisons between the Gospel and the Koran and between “Mahomet” and “Esau.”

The conversation went as follows: Carey and his associate argued that no one could understand the Koran as it was written in Arabic and few Muslims could read Arabic. “The Question,” then was, “how can you Obey it? And Wherefore are you Mahomedans?” In response, the “Mahomedans” offered that they had learned the instructions of the Koran. One Muslim even claimed that he had indeed read the Koran in Arabic. Further, they said they knew that “the Koran was sent to confirm the Words of Scripture [i.e., the Bible]” because “the Jews, and Christians had corrupted the Bible, which was the reason why God made the revelation by Mahomet.” Clearly, they were convinced in their faith and in the better value offered to them by the Koran as an improvement on the Bible.

Carey then asked them: what did they make of the difference between Jesus and Mohammed? To this they proudly replied, “Mahomet was the Friend of God, but Esau, by whom they mean Jesus, was the Spirit of God.” In their minds, a friend was more important than the spirit: a friend was someone who could relate with God, spent time with God, and had a personal relationship with God. Carey did not have a response, but he thought his munshi came up with a clever one.

55. Carey’s Journal, 12.
56. Carey’s Journal, 12.
57. Carey’s Journal, 12.
58. Das, Sahibs and Munshis. Local partners and assistants, called munshi(s), played an important role in the translation work of Indian missionaries like William Carey. Throughout Carey’s 1794 Journal, for instance, we find references to his dependence on his local munshi (or, clerk) to learn Bengali, improve his translations, and do evangelistic work. For most of his early months in India, Carey could not speak proper Bengali and was unable to preach. His munshi translated and spoke for him. It is evident that the work in Serampore depended much on local clerks and assistants. Yet, the relation between missionaries and their clerks was asymmetrical. In Carey’s correspondences, for instance, he refers simply to “Moonshee,” a man – and the assistant was most likely a man – about whom further details are sparse. Munshis were local collaborators and sometimes managers, but a munshi and
“Moonshee shrewdly replied, then which would you think highest your Friend, or your Soul, or Spirit.” Carey did not record the Muslims’ response in his Journal. He did, however, note that, “all this [i.e., the back and forth] they bore with good temper; but What effect it may have time must determine.”59

A few things are noteworthy about this exchange. Carey’s Journal notes substantial encounters with Hindus and Hindu scholars, but that book also reveals that his early converts were Muslims. Many conversations with Hindus and Muslims are recorded in the Journal but a common thread in the Muslim conversations is the way in which Carey found common anchor points with Islam. Muslims shared a religious heritage with Christians, acknowledged Christians as their (misguided) predecessors, and considered Mohammed an improvement over a preceding prophet, Jesus (suggesting the lineage of divine revelation they shared). In other words, Islam was a ‘hospitable’ faith for the Christian message. Further, Carey’s Journal also provides a window into the relational dynamic between evangelists and those being addressed. The Muslims readily countered Carey’s arguments. They remained unconvinced and found it in their purview to judge Carey’s claims. They were gracious during the exchange – “bore it with good temper.” Reading Carey’s encounter with these Muslims gives the impression that the Muslims felt secure in their faith even as they were open to hearing Carey’s case. Modern conversations on prosletyzation in India have taken on a very different tone and, more than two centuries after Carey’s colonial-era encounter,60 Indian Christians find themselves in a situation where States

60. Carey’s encounter has not been presented here in order to represent perceptions of Christian evangelism in colonial India. Rather, I have employed the Muslims’ response to Carey’s evangelism in order to contrast it with public perceptions of Christian evangelism that are prevalent today in modern India.
and Governments have found it necessary to stop the (real and perceived) threat of Christian evangelism to the (real and perceived) social order in India. The next story illustrates a modern and wide-spread perception of Christians in India.

On March 12, 1993, nearly 200 years after Carey’s encounter in Manicktullo Bazar, a group of prominent church leaders walked into a meeting with the Governor of the State of Andhra Pradesh, Shri Krishna Kant. Governor Kant had invited the church leaders. Bishop Franklin Jonathan – whose work was discussed in chapter four – was part of this meeting and wrote about it in *Biśap: Dāyitv, Darśan aur Mūly* (“Bishop: Vocation, Vision and Value”), his 1994 guidebook for church Bishops. As Jonathan tells it, the church leaders met Kant for more than an hour. In Kant, the Christians were meeting a sympathetic public leader. Kant was, as Jonathan describes him, “a good scholar, top-class politician and a political leader desirous of national unity and communal harmony.”61 Yet, for more than an hour Kant challenged the church leaders on their actions. According to Jonathan, Kant said, “the Christian community and Christian leaders are most learned and enlightened.” In light of this fact Kant had a request to make. Was it possible, he asked, for Christians to “voluntarily cease evangelization and conversion for at least fifty years”?62

Jonathan’s record suggests that the Governor was making a request and not a demand – it is safe to assume, quite aware as a state official of the right to profess and propagate religion that Indian citizens enjoy under their Constitution. Other details are sparse and it is unclear why this group

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of leaders was asked to represent Christians in India? Who were the other people in attendance – in addition to Jonathan and Kant? Was the request specific to Andhra Pradesh or was it national in scope? What were the responses of those present in the meeting? The request, however, did generate some reflection, at least on Jonathan’s part.

For Jonathan, Kant’s request was a call to consider the state of public perceptions of Christian evangelism as something with considerable (negative) effects that Christians could consider discontinuing for a substantial time. “What is the meaning,” Jonathan wrote in Bišap, “of evangelism? Is it to share the love of God with others?” 63 “Have we,” Jonathan wondered, “sent the wrong signal to those who are outside the church?” 64 While we do not know if the church leaders agreed with Kant’s request, at least Jonathan was clearly sympathetic to the issue Kant’s comments had raised regarding public perceptions of Indian Christians in modern India.

Read in light of each other, these two encounters are revealing for a few reasons. First, modern perceptions of Christian activities have focused on evangelistic practices by Christians; while the social footprint of Christian churches in India – through their many hospitals, schools, colleges, orphanages, and charities – garners little public attention, conversions and evangelistic practices have come to occupy a primary place in public perceptions of Indian Christians. Further, State Governments and lawmakers have felt increasingly motivated to intervene in such practices in order to ‘protect’ easily-swayed ‘Hindus’ from converting. Many studies – including that of Bauman on anti-Pentecostal violence – have traced the caste context behind such motivations. Nevertheless, in modern narratives of Christian evangelism the agency to refuse Christian claims

63. Jonathan, Bišap, 71: Śubh samācār pracār kā arth kyā hai? Kyā yah parameśvar ke prem ko dūsrom ke sāth bāṁtnā hai?
64. Jonathan, Bišap, 71: Kyā hamne un logoṁ ko, jo kalīsiyā ke bāhar hain, galat saṅket die hain?
– as present with Carey’s Muslim interlocutors – seems to have disappeared. Finally, in modern accounts by Hindu nationalists naïve and easily-swayed ‘Hindus’ – usually a reference to marginalized Dalits and tribals who would question their classification as ‘Hindus’ by upper-caste ‘Hindus’ – need to be protected from the aggression of Christian evangelists. Underlining the opposition to Christian conversions in India is also, I would offer, the perception that one cannot be both a loyal Christian and Indian. India, in this account, is Hindu and Christianity is foreign. An allegiance to one (India) then cannot pair with an allegiance to the other (Christianity). To align with both is a form of divided loyalty. Nineteenth century Hindi advocates made such claims regarding Urdu and Muslims in India. Modern public discourses seem to be repeating these claims regarding English and Christians in India.

It is in light of the public attitudes towards Christians in India – as aggressive evangelists, followers of a foreign faith, and culturally not Indian – that the attempts of Hindi Christian scholars to portray their faith as linguistically Hindi, culturally Indian, and theo-ethically Christian is best understood. Metaphors like Trishanku and cassock-wearing Catholic Fathers invite Indian Christians to pick a place and not remain caught between two places. And so, Anand invites his readers to reject the claim that Hindi is the language of Hindus, Urdu that of Muslims, and English that of Christians. Moreover, Lall and Howell ask their readers to evangelize with respect and evangelize on the basis of personal relations and without denigrating or destroying or insulting the religion and faith of another. Khan and Dayal insist that their readers use, promote, and safeguard Hindi as the language of their Christian faith. In these and similar proposals by Hindi Christians authors that have been studied in this dissertation, we find a persistent commitment to present a form of Christian speech and acts that is intentionally and
purposefully Hindi, Indian, and Christian in form and content. While many more issues – five of which I identified above – need to be explored in the study of Hindi Christian literature, I hope this study has brought us one step closer to better understand the form and content of Christian witness that is evident in Hindi Christian literature in modern India.
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1. Some Hindi publications provide an English translation of the Hindi title; such translations are noted within box brackets […]. Where no English translation is provided by the publisher, I have provided an English title; such translations are noted within brackets (“…”).


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