

Reader's Report on Book Proposal to Ashgate on *Chosen Race: Colonial Christianity Against the Hierarchies of Empire*

The essential idea of this proposal, namely to present an indigenous Christian perspective on mission Christianity as represented by the Baptist Missionary Society's missions in India and the Caribbean, is both sound and commendable. The concern to recover and delineate indigenous Christian perspectives is now apparent throughout contemporary scholarship of the missionary movement in the colonial period, and to that extent the proposal is following an already established trend rather than attempting anything that is in itself novel in theoretical terms. The originality of this project would therefore lie in the application of this established historiographical trend to the study of British Baptist missions, but also in the potential illumination afforded by the juxtaposition of East and West Indian case studies, something that is very rarely attempted. The author's PhD dissertation would provide a useful starting point for the project, but would need substantial expansion and re-framing, for only in one chapter (5) is the dissertation unambiguously focussed on recovery of the experience and narratives of indigenous Christians. Hence the proposed length of the book – 65,000 words – is inadequate for a study that will attempt to cover both India and the Caribbean. It might be wise to confine the scope to Bengal and Jamaica (omitting North India, Orissa, Ceylon, the Bahamas, and Trinidad), but even so, more space than is currently envisaged would be required if the treatment is to have any depth and to commend itself within the academic constituency of imperial history.

There would need to be a substantial discussion of the methodological difficulties of attempting to reconstruct indigenous perspectives from sources that are in the great majority of cases written by British missionaries. The author would also need to expand the range of her secondary reading, which is patchy in its coverage and necessarily reflective of the state of scholarship as it was at five or more years ago. I list below some of the most obvious omissions from her bibliography. She also needs to familiarize herself with the *Baptist Quarterly*. The author is noticeably weak in her understanding of caste and of the differing textures of empire in India under East India Company control and in Jamaican planter society. The documents submitted also suffer from a tendency to assume that the colonial environment was the invariable context within which the British missionary movement operated in the nineteenth century, and this assumption is reflected in her use of the phrase 'colonial Christianity', which appears to mean indigenous Christianity located within a colonial environment. The focus is in places too narrow: little acknowledgement is given of the fact that Protestant missions in India had begun in the first decade of the eighteenth century, and there is no emphasis on the fact that the evangelical missionary movement was a transnational and essentially ecumenical enterprise in which national and denominational perspectives were normally secondary to ideas of a common evangelical project of global missionary expansion.

Hence, while this proposal offers some promise, the author needs in my judgment to spend some considerable time in expanding her range of reading in mission and imperial history, and in preparing a revised proposal for a longer book confined to the two most important BMS fields.

Suggestions for further reading

- Becker, Judith and Stanley, Brian (eds.), *Europe as the Other: External Perspectives on European Christianity* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014).
- Bolt, Cawley, *Reluctant or Radical Revolutionaries: Evangelical Missionaries and Afro-Jamaican Character, 1834-1870* (Wipf & Stock, 2014)
- Brooke, Jonathan, “‘We may have read – but the reality!’ Narrating Baptist missions in Bengal, 1800-1855’ (University of London PhD thesis, 2009).
- Carson, Penelope, *The East India Company and Religion 1698-1858* (Cambridge University Press, 2013)
- Cox, Jeffrey, *The British Missionary Enterprise since 2008* (Routledge, 2008)
- Forrester, Duncan B., *Caste and Christianity: Attitudes and Policies on Caste of Anglo-Saxon Protestant Missions in India* (Curzon Press, 1980)
- Frykenberg, Robert Eric, *Christianity in India from Beginnings to the Present* (Oxford University Press, 2008)
- Laird, Michael A. *Missionaries and Education in Bengal, 1793-1837* (Clarendon Press, 1972)
- Oddie, Geoffrey A. *Imagined Hinduism: British Protestant Missionary Constructions of Hinduism, 1793-1900* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006)
- Stanley, Brian, ‘Christian missions, antislavery, and the claims of humanity, c. 1813-1873’ in Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley (eds.), *World Christianities, c. 1815-c. 1914*, The Cambridge History of Christianity, volume 8 (Cambridge University Press, 2006).