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EDITORIAL

Welcome to Volume 3, Issue 2 of the Journal of Religion and Public Life

Canon Dr Chris Sugden [1]

A number of themes unite the articles in this issue, all by our faculty and doctoral graduates and the book reviews.

Two articles focus on the work of two European missionaries in India, Christian Schwarz in the eighteenth century, and Amy Carmichael in the early twentieth century. Their involvement in Indian public life and concern for the most vulnerable in society should be required reading for those who would seek to denigrate missionary workers as puppets of the oppressors. Another misconception about mission history is addressed in an article on the role of mothers in the Missio Dei, which asserts that 'the accusation launched by some that Christianity suppressed women must confront the overwhelming data of what actually happened. There is much evidence of the *missio Dei* related to mothers' empowerment within Christianity, although this empowerment within motherhood is many times hidden from the academic side of mission history as it is taken for granted.'

A study on theological education in Africa argues for training that combines intellectual formation with spiritual maturity and community engagement, thus echoing the pattern exhibited by Schwarz and Carmichael.

The four books reviewed address key questions facing Christian engagement in public life. What is the nature of justice; how should we argue for an objective moral order so as to combat secular individualist subjectivism; how are the two often conflicting histories of Israelis and Palestinians over their disputed lands to be understood so as to move towards a reconciliation; and how are Christians to understand religious freedom in India with its secular constitution but increasingly governed by religious nationalism?

The editorial team hopes that this issue will provide both historical and contemporary resources for readers who are concerned to relate Christian faith to the whole of life.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Afro-Missional Pedagogy: Integrating Spiritual, Communal, And Traditional Orientation in African Theological Education

Charles Gyasi [1]

Abstract: This paper explores the integration of spiritual formation with community and traditional orientation in African theological education by reflecting on Ephesians 4:1-3. It argues that for an effective Christian calling, there is the need to foster humility, gentleness, patience, and communal unity. This directly addresses the need for mission oriented, contextualised, transformative leadership in Africa that bridges academic rigour with relational and spiritual growth.

Much of Africa's theological curriculum currently remains a bit removed from contemporary realities in African societies. A major issue is "Africanising" the curriculum to speak to local realities for maximum impact. Theological education in Africa often faces the challenge of balancing rigorous intellectual formation with the imperative for spiritual maturity and community engagement. This paper proposes a pedagogical framework that integrates a strong spiritual foundation with a communal and traditional focus, using a contextualised analysis of Ephesians 4:1-3. Examining the Pauline appeal to "walk worthy of the calling" with humility, gentleness, patience, and unity, this paper argues that these virtues are not merely personal ethics but essential communal imperatives for church leadership in Africa.

Engaging in a theological exploration of this text, the study suggests that African theological institutions can design African models to develop a curriculum that produces transformational servant leaders who prioritise reconciliation, development, and community solidarity. The findings indicate that, when incorporated into curriculum development, the relational and spiritual principles in Ephesians 4:1-3 foster stronger pastoral leadership capable of addressing both the spiritual and socio-cultural needs of the African society.

This paper thus examines the challenges of integrating spiritual, communal, and traditional orientation into theological formation and proposes strategies for enhancing ministerial training in the African context.

Keywords: Theological Education, Spiritual Formation, Communal Orientation, Traditional Orientation.

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1.0 Introduction

The topic of this paper "Towards an Afro-Missional Pedagogy: Integrating the Spiritual, Communal, and Traditional Orientation into Ministerial Formation in African Theological Education" draws attention to several critical issues about how theology is taught and formed within the African context. At its heart, the discussion is about ensuring that theological education does not become only academic and remain with an external origin, but deeply spiritual, culturally relevant, and socially engaged to the African.

The pursuit of holistic theological education in Africa requires a deliberate integration of spiritual depth, communal solidarity, and traditional knowledge moving beyond mere academic instruction. Central to this formative process is the cultivation of an orientation that harmonises personal piety with social responsibility. This ensures that ministerial candidates are equipped for the unique cultural and ecclesial landscape of the continent. As noted by Bello, theological education provides the platform for character formation and social change, rather than merely an academic pursuit. It is therefore a transformative tool for both the Church and society.

Grounding this exploration in the exhortations of Ephesians 4:1–3, this paper reflects on how the virtues of humility, gentleness, patience, and unity can be meaningfully woven into the fabric of theological education in African seminaries. Such an approach seeks to produce leaders who are not only theologically competent but also deeply rooted in the transformative power of spiritual discipline and communal engagement. Many students enter seminary with the idealistic, romanticised notion that they are stepping into a cloistered, intense environment of continuous prayer, rigorous fasting, and deep devotional Bible study designed solely to fuel their spiritual life.

They often arrive expecting a spiritual bootcamp geared toward personal devotion, only to be confronted with the abrupt reality that seminary is rigorous graduate-level academic work, demanding high-level cognitive skills, extensive research, and complex scholarly analysis of Hebrew, Greek, Philosophy, Missiology, and Theology etc. When confronted with this academic pressure, vastly different from the simpler raw Bible study they anticipated, many students feel immediately lost, overwhelmed, and spiritually disoriented. Such students struggle to reconcile their initial enthusiastic calling with a mountain of scholarly papers.

Prior to commencing our ministerial formation and theological education in the early 2000s, we held specific expectations regarding seminary life. Upon enrolment, we observed that while some of these expectations were realistic, others were not. Our

daily routine integrated rigorous academic study with worship requiring a drastic mental, emotional, social, and spiritual adjustment. This experience reshaped our worldview and led many of us to reflect on how the seminary environment could fulfil a tripartite purpose: providing theological education, facilitating ministerial formation, and fostering communal life.

In his work, "Understanding and Developing Theological Education," Bernhard Ott offers a multifaceted definition of theological education that focuses on the practical and institutional purpose of the discipline. He observes that theological education is a specialised kind of training meant for pastors and leaders to enable them serve as leaders of the church primarily and secondarily as leaders in the community. Ott further categorises learning within this field into three distinct forms to emphasise that it is not limited to classroom settings although that represents an integral part. He calls these Formal Learning, Non-formal Learning, and Informal Learning.

Thus, theological environments are uniquely positioned to cultivate personal spiritual growth, ministerial competence, and communal engagement among seminarians through multifaceted avenues. As the primary training grounds for future clergy, theologians, and educators, these institutions bear a significant responsibility to form individuals who are both spiritually conscious and deeply committed to community service.

This paper explores how such an orientation can be integrated into the formative process, drawing upon theological principles, spiritual disciplines, communal strategies, and traditional consciousness rooted in the exhortations of Ephesians 4:1–3.

2.0 Missional Reflection on Ephesians 4:1-3

Ephesians 4:1-3 in the New Living Translation (NLT) reads:
"Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace."
In verse 1, Paul, encourages the Ephesians to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which they have been called. This means living in a way that reflects their new identity and purpose in Christ. After all, the Christian calling is a life of transformation rooted in a deep relationship with God through Christ. Such a call serves as the foundational catalyst for missional engagement, shifting the focus from head knowledge to a dynamic outward witness.

The Pauline exhortation in verse 2 mentions characteristics of this worthy walk. They are humility, gentleness, patience, and bearing with one another in love. These are qualities that demonstrate a transformation in their lives, moving away from their former ways and embracing their new identity in Christ. The Church's witness to the world is strengthened when practitioners can show the transformative power of the Gospel with their transformed lives.

In the third verse, he urges them to "be diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This verse highlights the importance of preserving the unity that comes from being united in Christ and working together to maintain peace and present a united Christian front to the world as a testament of the impact of the Gospel. John Stott in his work, "The Message of Ephesians" argues that Christian unity is as indestructible as the unity of God Himself. He emphasises that Paul in this verse does not command believers to create unity as if it were a human achievement but to eagerly maintain the unity the Holy Spirit has already established.

Exegetically, scholars recognise this portion as the critical pivot of the epistle because it marks the transition from theological exposition (Chapters 1–3) to ethical exhortation (Chapters 4–6). It thus represents a shift from what God has done to how believers must respond). Andrew T. Lincoln argues that this "walk" is an ethical response to the "vocation" i.e., calling, mentioned in the previous chapters, He points out that Christian identity precedes Christian behaviour.

Ephesians 4:1-3, thus emphasises virtues essential for the cultivation of spiritual, communal, and traditional orientation.

3.0 The Key Orientations

3.1 Spiritual Orientation

Spiritual orientation refers to an individual's overall perspective, attitude, or approach to spiritual matters. It thus involves living a life that reflects our spiritual calling. Here, the necessity of aligning individual behaviour with spiritual identity is emphasised as a means of mitigating hopelessness. Spiritual orientation is characterised by humility, gentleness, patience, and unity. It represents the framework or the lens through which a person approaches and evaluates spiritual matters.

Spirituality expressed through acts of worship and dependence on the divine is a common reality in Africa. John S. Pobee describes African spirituality as being "danced out" rather than "thought out," emphasising that it is an experiential, action-oriented

connection to the divine rather than a purely intellectual theology. Pobee's observation draws attention to the scale of spirituality within the African context. However, the "dance out" must be optimised by ensuring that the African's spirituality and spiritual orientation do not remain a private business but a tool for public transformation. In this way, African spirituality becomes both "dance out" and "thought out".

In the context of Christianity, spiritual orientation is informed and defined by factors such as the Bible, Tradition, Theology, Personal Experience, and Community. When these factors are properly aligned in an individual, they produce practical community building virtues such as humility, gentleness, patience, and unity, virtues the Church and society want to see in seminarians and future pastors.

Spiritual orientation is strongly connected with spiritual well-being of seminarians and their ability to cope with stress, responsibilities, and expectations of both church and society. The 2020 study "Spiritual Well-Being and Resiliency of the Diocesan Seminarians of Antique" indicates that while seminarians demonstrate elevated levels of spiritual well-being, their actual resiliency, the ability to bear and recover from stress, remains low. Researchers established a positive correlation between spirituality and resilience yet recommended enhanced mental health programmes to bridge the gap in coping with the rigours of formation.

While theological institutions effectively prioritise academic rigour and ministerial preparation, a critical gap often exists in the holistic formation of seminarians. Current pedagogical models emphasise the technical mastery of biblical criticism and thematic analysis, yet frequently bypass the foundational discipline of comprehensive, cover-to-cover scriptural engagement. This omission is often justified by the distinction between the "Bible school" model and the "theological seminary" model; however, such a bifurcation risks untethering spiritual orientation from its primary source. Furthermore, there remains a notable lack of integrated, intentional exposure to mental health literacy within these environments. Consequently, while students may graduate with competent hermeneutical tools, they may lack both the deep scriptural saturation and the psychological resilience necessary for sustained vocational health.

Within the context of theological education, spiritual formation is conceptualised as a deliberate process of interior transformation, integrating disciplined practices that foster an intimate, unceasing communion with the Divine. This formative trajectory is not merely an adjunct to academic life but the essential framework through which students develop the spiritual maturity and vocational identity required for sustained,

lifelong ministry. Bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and faith, these environments aim to cultivate a robust interiority that serves as the foundation for pastoral efficacy and professional integrity. Theological environments must therefore incorporate structured opportunities for formation of positive spiritual orientation on the part of their students. Faculty and staff should model and mentor students in these practices, demonstrating how theological reflection and spiritual vitality go hand-in-hand.

Interestingly, a positive spiritual orientation is integral to building a healthy communal orientation. Thomas Moore in his 1992 work: “Care of the Soul” importantly observe: “Spirituality is not about escaping reality, but about transforming our perception of it, allowing us to see the world and ourselves in a new light.” His quote highlights the role of spiritual orientation in deepening our understanding of ourselves and the world we live in. This leads to personal growth, transformation, and healthy relationships with others. A comprehensive evaluation of spiritual orientation within theological formation must transcend the traditional metrics of private piety and academic competence. While disciplined scriptural engagement, liturgical participation, and ascetic practices remain foundational, they serve only as the scaffolding for a more profound interior transformation.

Additionally, true spiritual maturity is authenticated not by the accumulation of "thematic knowledge", but through the integration of that knowledge into the crucible of daily life. As evidenced by the insights of Thomas Moore, a robust spiritual orientation manifests as a recalibrated perception of reality, one that recognises the sacrament of the neighbour and prioritises the bond of unity within the Body of Christ as an existential necessity. Seminaries must produce practitioners who are scripturally grounded, psychologically resilient, and ethically consistent as they are theologically articulate. This ensures that their devotion to the altar is mirrored in their service to the community.

3.2 Communal Orientation

The African philosophical framework of Ubuntu articulated through the maxim, “a person is a person through other persons", offers a profound corrective approach to individualistic paradigms. When integrated into a seminary context, Ubuntu shifts the focus from competitive intellectualism to a communal orientation. Here, the formation of the individual seminarian is inextricably linked to the health of the collective body. This African sense of communalism suggests that theological education is not merely a private pursuit of a degree, but a shared journey of being-with others. In this environment, the seminary becomes a micro-cosmos of the Church, where mutual

responsibility, hospitality, and restorative justice are practiced as lived theology. Embracing this African ontological perspective, seminaries can foster an atmosphere where spiritual growth is measured not through solitary piety, but according to one's capacity to sustain and be sustained within the community.

In the context of Christianity, communal orientation highlights the importance of prioritising the collective needs and well-being of a community over individualistic goals. The community is viewed as an essential focus for navigating challenges and fostering a supportive environment that enhances resilience and growth.

Another issue the Ephesian text emphasises is the need to maintain the bond of unity among believers, the need for cordiality among Christians maintained through the bond of peace. It is through unity and cordiality that a healthy community can be created. Martin Luther King Jr. once said: "we must learn to live together as brothers and sisters or perish together as fools." King's use of familial terms such as "brothers and sisters" is rooted in the biblical concept of Koinonia (fellowship). For seminarians and ministers, this implies that unity is not a social preference, but a relational identity based on a shared divine parentage.

Maintaining this bond is the primary evidence of a genuine communal and spiritual orientation; without it, theological education becomes an individualistic pursuit that fails the "family" test of the Gospel. Thus, a communal orientation involves creating an environment where seminarians or students feel a sense of belonging, responsibility, and shared mission. This reflects the New Testament vision of the Church as the Body of Christ, where each member is vital (1 Corinthians 12:12–27).

Already, many theological institutions in Africa have platforms such as pastoral groups and denominational fellowships that provide opportunities for community building. Such platforms can deepen communal orientation through intentional practices such as peer mentoring schemes that will ensure communal discipleship, collaborative projects, and community service not just on campus but also in the neighbourhood. These experiences not only build relationships but also teach seminarians the skills of empathy, reconciliation, and servant leadership. A strong communal orientation addresses issues of justice and inclusion, embodying the Gospel's call to love and serve others.

John Chrysostom, one of the Early Church Fathers, was known for his deep concern for social justice and his emphasis on living out the Gospel through action. He once said that if you cannot see Jesus Christ in the homeless, and in your neighbour, you cannot see him on the altar. Thus, true Christian faith is not just about ritual or worship

but cordial relationships. It is about recognising Christ in others especially those who do not have the same abilities and rich background as we have.

In this quote, Chrysostom challenges the idea of separating religious devotion (represented by the altar) from social responsibility and engagement (represented by the homeless or human person). It suggests that worship without loving relationships is empty. If someone reveres Christ in church but ignores Him in his neighbours, their worship is incomplete or even hypocritical.

The quote is a call to let our spiritual vision be shaped by fellow feeling, justice, and mercy, attributes fundamental for communal orientation.

3.3 Traditional Orientation

Within an African context, traditional orientation denotes a holistic worldview characterised by the inextricable link between religious belief, cultural praxis, and social existence. This perspective conceptualises the cosmos as a "religious universe," wherein every facet of human activity is profoundly mediated by the spiritual realm. Consequently, the pursuit of prosperity and ontological dignity is contingent upon the rigorous preservation and practice of specific ancestral and communal values.

While contemporary African society has experienced a significant erosion of its unique traditional bearings, several core orientations remain deeply entrenched. This reality suggests that unless seminarians are equipped to understand and utilise these retained traditional values and structures, their effectiveness in broader society may be compromised. Historical evidence supports this; 19th-century European missionaries prioritised engagement with traditional authorities, such as chiefs, queen mothers, and opinion leaders. They recognised that securing their support facilitated the wider dissemination of the Gospel.

Despite this historical blueprint, modern seminary curricula often lack strategic instruction on engaging traditional leadership for missional advancement. Notably, the mainline denominations in Ghana have established initiatives such as the "Association of Kings and Queens" to mobilise traditional rulers for Christ. However, a significant gap remains. Ministers-on-trial currently undergoing seminary training are not provided with specific modules to prepare them for professional and pastoral relationships with these traditional dignitaries.

Furthermore, there is a distinct failure to integrate traditional African epistemologies into seminary pedagogy. The African cultural context places high value on oral traditions, including proverbs, riddles, appellations, and narrative storytelling. The exclusion of these indigenous modes of communicating wisdom from instructional frameworks creates a profound disconnect. This situation ultimately hinders the preparation of seminarians for impactful ministry and leadership in their post-training contexts.

4.0 Theological Foundation for Spiritual, Communal, and Traditional Orientation

The foundational architecture of Christian theological tradition is inherently spiritual, communal, and traditional; a paradigm classically articulated in the primitive ecclesiology of the Early Church (Acts 2:42–47) and the High Priestly Prayer of Christ (John 17:20–23). In this Johannine discourse, Jesus petitions for a profound ontological unity among his followers, utilising the union of the Trinity (whereby the three persons share in the divine life while maintaining their distinct identity) as the archetypal model. This unity among believers is not merely a social consensus but a participation in the divine life. It suggests that a seminarian's spiritual, communal, and traditional orientation must be fundamentally trinitarian characterised by the same mutual indwelling and communal self-giving that defines the Godhead.

The theologian John Zizioulas argues that personhood exists only through relationship; thus, a seminarian's identity is hidden in Christ and sustained within the Trinity. This ontological foundation mitigates the isolation and identity threat often associated with vocational struggles.

Therefore, one critical message the doctrine of the Trinity conveys is the importance of community. The triune nature of God Himself models relationality, suggesting that community is not just beneficial but intrinsic to divine nature. When believers are invited to come to the Lord's table, they are not only invited to deepen their relationship with the Triune God but to a community fellowship with one another. So, theological education must be rooted in the formation of the whole person, aligning with Jesus' command to love God and neighbour (Matthew 22:37–39).

The synthesis of diverse Christian traditions i.e., Reformed, Methodist, and Catholic, underscores a shared doctrinal commitment to communal interdependence. In Reformed theology, the covenant serves as the primary framework, asserting that the individual's relationship with God is inextricably linked to their membership within a covenanted body.

Similarly, the Wesleyan-Methodist tradition utilises “bands” and “classes” to manifest a community of grace, where spiritual maturation is predicated on mutual accountability and collective support.

Furthermore, Catholic Social Teaching (CST) provides a robust ethical architecture through the principle of the “common good,” which mandates that spiritual development must result in tangible communal responsibility.

Collectively, these traditions affirm that a healthy theological environment requires a dual focus: an interior spiritual orientation that is consistently validated through an outward, communal orientation. So, communal orientation is fundamental to what seminarians are called to do in the Church and society particularly after their training. Moreover, the doctrine of incarnation compels seminaries to rethink their exclusion of traditional orientation in their curriculum. Just as Christ pitched his tent among us (John 1:14), the Gospel must be incarnated into African traditional life to be fully understood. Seminaries that ignore traditional orientation are essentially asking students to “de-Africanise” themselves to become Christians, which contradicts the model of Christ becoming one of us.

5.0 Expected Challenges and Considerations

Incorporating a robust spiritual, communal, and traditional orientation within a theological environment presents several complex challenges. Some of these challenges are:

(i) The Danger of Syncretism: While the integration of traditional orientation is vital for contextual relevance, it carries the inherent risk of theological syncretism. The unauthorised blending of Christian doctrine with traditional orientation in a way that compromises the uniqueness and finality of Christ is a legitimate risk. If not navigated with rigorous biblical discernment, incarnating the Gospel can devolve into universalism or the validation of practices that directly contradict Scripture, such as ancestral veneration that borders on worship or the reliance on traditional spiritual protections. This creates a dualistic faith where the Bible is used for public liturgy while traditional rituals are secretly sought for real-world crises.

These anticipated challenges are not insurmountable; they can be effectively addressed through the identification and implementation of strategic interventions such as encouraging delicate balance.

(ii) The Trap of Performative Spirituality: In an environment where spiritual maturity is expected, there is a persistent risk of "spiritual masking" in which case individuals adopt outward rituals to meet institutional expectations without inward transformation. Hyde argues that when spiritual value is measured only by productivity, utility, or output, the "authentic spiritual voice" is silenced. Guarding against superficiality requires a shift in focus from performance to authenticity, ensuring that communal practices are expressions of genuine conviction rather than social obligation.

(iii) The Academic-Spiritual Tension: Balancing rigorous intellectual inquiry with a consistent devotional life can be challenging. Another tension is the danger of treating the Divine as a subject to be analysed rather than a presence to be encountered because one has become overly academic. Sustaining the balance between academic and spiritual life requires disciplined boundaries and a commitment to "praying one's theology."

(iv) Navigating Pluralism: Contemporary African society is characterised by a high degree of cultural, linguistic, and socio-political pluralism. Theological diversity, cultural nuances, and varying spiritual lineages can create natural friction. The challenge lies in moving beyond mere tolerance toward a culture of mutual enrichment. Seminarians must intentionally cultivate an attitude of dialogue, viewing diversity not as a hurdle to be cleared, but as a primary source of strength. This is particularly essential in ecumenical seminaries and institutions.

(v) Institutional Accountability: Building a deep community is not a passive process. It demands ongoing evaluation and a willingness to engage in uncomfortable feedback loops. Seminarians must remain committed to a cycle of continual growth, allowing the community to function as a mirror that reflects areas needing transformation. Peer accountability facilitates growth and helps seminarians remain faithful to their vocational commitments.

6.0 Strategies for Incorporating Spiritual, Communal, and Traditional Orientation in Africa's Theological Education

To effectively incorporate spiritual, communal, and traditional orientation suitable for a theological environment, seminaries and seminarians must be intentional in their design and implementation of the following:

(i) Curriculum Design: Seminaries already have activities and some courses that partially address the issue of communal orientation. For example, some seminaries have spirituality seminars, gender studies, ethics, pastoral care, church history, and missions, but lack a specific module that addresses the issue of community engagement based on communal orientation and direct Bible study. Such modules, when incorporated shift the curriculum from a heavily theoretical concentration to a more practical mode of study. This is needed since the work of pastors is heavily hinged on how well they relate to church members and people in the community, and the depth of their biblical knowledge.

(ii) Leadership Development: Is it not necessary to have a module for leadership development? It is not automatic to churn out servant leaders for our churches without servant leadership training to our seminarians. In a community-oriented African context, leaders are expected to be servants who guide and nurture the community rather than dominate it. Theological education must therefore emphasise humility, service, and relational leadership rooted in the example of Christ. This can be achieved through contextualised, practical, and decentralised training that seeks to address specific needs such as leadership development.

The Students Representative Council and the Alumni Association should not only be concerned about physical projects on campus but must also focus on the weaknesses in the seminary's leadership development structure and make informed suggestions aimed at Africanising theological education in Africa.

(iii) Support Systems: Seminaries in Africa can increase their efforts at providing access to counselling, spiritual guidance, and peer support for students and others in the neighbourhood to foster holistic well-being. This can go a long way to enhance theological and ministerial formation on campuses while at the same time strengthen the African concept of ubuntu.

(iv) Mission and Witness Projects: Mission and witness are not merely subjects for seminarians to study but the very heartbeat of their vocation. A good understanding of the Missio Dei (the mission of God) serves to remind future ministers that the Church exists for the sake of mission. Seminarians have the duty to move beyond the walls of the classroom into the complexities of human life with the Gospel. By prioritising mission and witness, seminarians learn that their primary role is to be a “living epistle” embodying the humility and unity of Ephesians 4:1–3 before they ever preach it. This focus ensures that theological

education produces practitioners who are not just academically decorated but intentionally prepared to lead communities in a way that reflects the reconciling power of Christ in a divided society.

A shared commitment by seminarians to proclaiming the Gospel and embodying God's love through acts of justice and mercy in evangelism will help strengthen the bond of togetherness. This collaborative commitment to evangelism does not only model the Body of Christ to the world but also develops the relational resilience necessary to combat ministerial isolation after graduation. Ultimately, these projects transform the abstract concept of "togetherness" into a functional, mission-driven unity that defines their vocational identity. They also serve as a tangible response on the part of seminarians to God's overflowing love towards them.

(v) Incorporation of Traditional Orientation: Seminary curricula as a matter of urgency should look to changes that promote African consciousness by incorporating African traditional modes of learning and interaction. However, in doing so, the seminary curriculum must establish a clear biblical filter, ensuring that while traditional forms such as proverbs and social hierarchies are utilised, the core content of the Gospel remains uncompromised and transformative rather than merely assimilated into existing pagan frameworks.

(vi) Promotion of Mother Tongue Theology: Intentional promotion of mother tongue for theological education is essential for Africa's theological development as noted by Ekem. Such a move bridges the gap between theological elitism and grassroot leadership. In this way, the grassroots are offered the opportunity to express their knowledge of God and Christian experiences in a language with which they are comfortable. Additionally, the use of mother tongue serves as a tool to decolonise both theological education and the Christian faith in Africa.

(vii) Intra Seminary Engagements: Seminaries should share a common platform for exchange of ideas and experiences. This platform could also be used for debates, and presentation of academic papers as well as holding prayer clinics. Many seminarians in the past did not experience that as students but looking at how our world is opening up quickly; efforts must be made to create such a platform to offer both local and global exchanges of experiences.

7.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the integration of spiritual, communal, and traditional orientation within a theological framework is not merely an elective enhancement but a fundamental theological imperative and pedagogical necessity aimed at Africanising theological education. This integrated approach transcends the mere acquisition of propositional knowledge, facilitating a shift from a purely cognitive understanding of the Divine to a lived, relational orthopraxy. Bridging the gap between the academy and the altar, we equip seminarians for a ministry that is as spiritually grounded as it is intellectually rigorous.

Such an integrative journey demands a high degree of institutional intentionality, intellectual humility, and a clear-sighted vision of the formative goals of theological education. While the process of synthesis is demanding, its outcomes are profoundly transformative, yielding leaders who are capable of revitalising congregations and engaging the broader social fabric with spiritual depth.

Scriptural foundations, specifically Ephesians 4:1-3, offer a normative framework for this endeavour. It emphasises the vocation to which we are called. This text mandates a lifestyle characterised by humility, gentleness, patience, and unity, virtues that serve as the bedrock for a healthy, unified faith community. Ultimately, as Richard Rohr notes, when we stick together, and maintain the bond of unity, we are more than the sum of our individual parts; together we can achieve what we cannot achieve alone. This communal synergy is the quintessential goal of ministerial and theological training: a collective witness that far exceeds the capacity of the isolated individual.

The African seminary faces the imminent risk of institutional obsolescence and socioreligious alienation. Unless immediate measures are taken to integrate spiritual, communal, and traditional orientation into the curriculum, the academy will fail to facilitate the profound vocational transformation necessary for seminarians to engage effectively with the communities they are mandated to serve.

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REFLECTIVE COMMENTARY

Dohnavur Fellowship 125 Years: A Vision with a Mission

Rev Fr Dr Daniel Thejus [1]

Abstract: This article reflects on the 125 year legacy of Amy Carmichael's, The Dohnavur Fellowship. It argues that the sign of a good mission is not merely its survival for said many years, but it's ability to carry on its vocation by broadening, reflecting and reimagining its mission for every generation. It explores how Christian mission, in order to continue serving meaningfully, should go beyond the work of their founders to the creation of relevant and meaningful communities shaped by worship, belonging and service. The article also considers Dohnavur's significance particularly in their relationship between the gospel and social care, the importance of indigenous Christian agency, and the changing dynamics of mission between the West and the Global South. Finally, it offers a challenge to the Church in the West to build faith communities where people belong.

Keywords: Dohnavur Fellowship, Amy Carmichael, Mimosa biography, Incarnational Christian mission, Global South Christianity, Holistic community development

A week after the celebrations marking 125 years of the Dohnavur Fellowship (DF), I found myself sitting among the DF community in Dohnavur, Tamil Nadu for its Harvest Festival. I had come after the anniversary celebrations, expecting perhaps to encounter a place shaped principally by Amy Carmichael and its remarkable history. Instead, I encountered something much more interesting: an active living Christian community.

My association with DF goes back to my great-grandmother, Mimosa, who after one encounter with Amy, as a child, heard that there is a God who loves her. The idea that there is a God who loves her transformed her life forever. Her fascination with this new God who loves her, had consequences, she was met with severe persecution for years

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and yet her faith survived with little or no contact from Christians. Coming from a family that was caste conscious she was discouraged, by her father first and then later her husband, from moving into DF. Deeply moved by her experiences Amy wrote a biography titled, Mimosa. Some years later my grandfather and his brothers moved into DF. They set aside caste, donated their lands and properties to DF and took on the disciplines of community life. In time they were entrusted with leadership roles within DF. My father was born there, and a note still survives from Amy in which she had suggested a name for him to my grandparents.

Sitting there fully aware of my own history intertwined to this place got me thinking about DF's past and where it appeared to be at present. Along with representatives from various denominations, I had been asked to participate in the liturgy, and as the service unfolded, the significance of the place began to take on character. DF is not simply a historic missionary outpost to be reminisced. It is a community, beyond narrow denominational lines, still worshipping, still singing, still giving thanks, still working, and still seeking ways to live out its Christian vocation.

The Harvest Festival seemed an especially appropriate way to encounter DF. One, because Amy drew extensively from nature for spiritual succour. And two, celebration of harvest keeps us grounded in the history of the produce of that land. What the harvest festival taught me was that an anniversary service should never simply be about what has happened in the past. It is about receiving what has grown now, giving thanks for it, and preparing for another season of harvest. That is how I see DF today; it looks back at the past, but rooted and ready to take on the needs of today.

A Mission that Stays

125 years is a significant milestone for any Christian mission. Often Christin missions begin with a lot of energy and genuine vision but run out of steam and disappear within a generation. Some others survive as monuments to their founders, detached from the current realities that they find themselves in.

What began as a home for vulnerable and rescued children in 1901 by Amy Carmichael gradually developed into a full-fledged Christian community - The Dohnavur Fellowship of South India. DF continues to be an encompassing community with education, healthcare, farming, animal husbandry, care for women, children and elderly as its core mission. Today DF describes itself as an independently run Indian Christian organisation run by successive generations of individuals who grew up within the community, choosing to continue serving in its mission.

This, I think is the most important accomplishment of the 125 year history of the DF. It is simply not a story of a mission that Amy Carmichael founded which has managed to survive despite its own share of internal issues. Rather this is an active community of Indian Christians addressing the immediate needs of its own and of those around.

A Mission that Sees

Amy Carmichael's story is an extraordinarily story of a 27 year old courageous young lady who arrived in a remote part of Tamil Nadu in 1895 and spent the remainder of her life there. She became increasingly concerned about children whom, she believed, were being placed in situations of serious exploitation and abuse. Her encounter with a young girl, named Preena, became particularly significant in the development of her ministry. Amy could not be satisfied with merely proclaiming the gospel if it ignored the concrete circumstances in which vulnerable people lived.

This is an important challenge for the Church today. Mission, in part, means learning to see the immediate needs of those in our congregation – emotional and practical needs, our wider community – teen pregnancies, drug and alcohol addiction, and the needs of those beyond our borders – communities that don’t have the support of the state to support them.

Christian mission can become abstract and therefore remarkably easy especially when we talk about evangelism, discipleship, justice, compassion, transformation and the Kingdom of God. While speaking about these ideas are extremely important to us as Christians, we also need to explore ways practical ways to put take these ideas and give it a human face. DF reminds us that Christian theology, like Christ, eventually must take on a human face.

A Mission that Incarnates

A child. A woman. A family. A village. A forest. These are particular places where suffering occurs and in which the love of Christ must be incarnated. The question therefore is not simply whether the Church has a theology of mission, but whether it has learned to see the world and its people whom God has placed in its vicinity.

From its beginning, the Fellowship understood Christian witness through a holistic pattern of life. The original work of caring for children over the years developed into education – creating an affordable boarding school for Indian Christian workers children; healthcare – a hospital with an active dental department (addressing a particular need of that area); child development – rehabilitation programmes for abused girls; continuing education and empowerment of women – a nursing

programme for young women; elderly care – an ever-growing number within DF and in India; ecological conservation – through its work in DF and Narriakadu in the Western Ghats; and community development.

This is not merely a matter of having many programmes. The deeper question to ask is, is the outworking of the Gospel attempting to recreate a community in the image of God? Because the Christian response to vulnerability is not merely to provide a range of services to someone who remains essentially an outsider. At its best, Christian mission should create safe spaces where the people can belong.

This has been one of the extraordinary features of the DF mission and hopefully will continue to be a community where people feel that they can belong.

A Mission that Moves On

For much of the history of modern evangelical Christianity, mission was imagined in terms of movement from the West to the rest of the world. Missionaries travelled from Britain, Ireland, Europe and North America to Africa, Asia and elsewhere taking their many denominational differences along with them. But Christianity today no longer fits that description. The demographic and spiritual centre of Christianity has shifted dramatically towards the Global South. The future of Christian mission cannot simply be about the West doing mission elsewhere. It increasingly involves Christians in the West receiving, learning and being challenged by Christians in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

DF today gives us a small, but important picture of that transition. We should not blindly romanticise the missionary culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many of them operated within the limitations of their upbringing and narrow cultural contexts; especially seen in their disparaging descriptions of Indian religious systems and its distinct cultures. At the same time, we cannot dismiss missionaries just because some of them were entangled with colonialism. We cannot ignore their acts of courage, sacrifice and service, as witnessed in the case of Amy and many others like her. There needs to be a middle ground. And the DF model comes close to that.

The story of DF would be an easy story to tell if Amy Carmichael were a permanent immovable fixture and DF merely remain confined to continuing the work that Amy left. While that partially might be the case too, the opposite is perhaps closer to the truth. I had the privilege of briefly glancing at some of Amy's unpublished entries. Looking at them, it appeared that Amy's outlook of mission was not to make herself indispensable. She was a complex person with a vision much broader than her times.

Her hope was that this community that she had created would outlive her, remain committed to Christ, and respond sensitively to local realities.

Amy died at DF in 1951. The work, however, did not end with her death. It subsequently passed into the hands of others and developed quite uniquely within the Indian context. The present Fellowship's emphasis on indigenous solutions is particularly significant in this respect.

What Can We Learn?

As I reflected on my experience in DF, I wondered, what could the church in the UK learn from a mission like DF in India? The church in England and other main line churches today wrestle with identity, scandal, and decline. Despite these issues, the positive thing, is that congregations are still asking, how can we reach younger generations, meaningfully engage diverse communities, and recover confidence in the Christian faith?

The DF experience challenges us to ask; are our churches spaces where people can genuinely belong?

In DF people lovingly called Amy – Amma – mother. A parent is not someone who merely organises a list of activities and events to keep their children entertained. They are primary carers. They embody a space where their children are seen and belong.

Can a stranger who wanders into our church feel welcome? Can an encounter with us make the love of Christ feel sincere? Can a lonely elderly person find a family? Can a vulnerable child find safety? Can a young woman find dignity? Can a young man find stability and structure? Can the community see the Church step up to issues that matter?

Perhaps what the church really needs is not a list of events, better strategies and institutional structure – while those are indeed important – what is required really is for people to know that the church and Christian mission is here to stay so people can belong, to see people in spite of their weaknesses and differences, to incarnate Christ in the community and keep moving on despite the struggle.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Maternal Agency and Care in the Missio Dei: A Practical-Theological Synthesis for Global Mission

Dr Renee Rheinbolt-Uribe [1]

Abstract: Mission theology often names the maternal while overlooking maternal agency and care. The article offers a practical-theological synthesis, bringing together my published work on maternal-thinking and motherlessness, a bounded case study of a Colombian congregation, and selected historical examples. Drawing on Sara Ruddick's maternal-thinking, extended by a fourfold practice of preservation, growth, acceptance, and release, and on the idea of a maternal commons, it asks what these sources reveal about mothers and mothering in the *missio Dei*. The Colombian case shows how one US-based mission organisation's assumptions about family, gender, and church belonging, treated as universal, marginalised local women's maternal agency, while the congregation's mothers and grandmothers helped sustain its communal life during crisis. Historical and textual examples suggest that this agency is a recurring, though often unrecognised, source of Christian faith, including under persecution. The case is bounded and does not represent all mission contexts, but it raises questions for mission agencies as mission initiatives increasingly emerge from the Global South. The article closes with four practical implications, for theological education, the recognition of maternal care, mission methods and policies, and reciprocal learning, and invites mission practice and policy to recognise maternal agency as one of the places from which Christians learn to discern and practise the *missio Dei*.

Keywords: *missio Dei*; maternal agency; maternal-thinking; mutuality; practical theology; Global South mission

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Although the maternal is implicit in mission, as in the well-known missiological dictum that "mission is the mother of theology" (Kähler, cited in Bosch 1991:16; see also Bosch 1991:521), my experience, beginning in my own missionary family and then as an adult mission practitioner, is that maternal agency and care are downplayed. For more than twenty years, I have heard stories of missionary mothers and families negotiating the demands of ministry and care for their children. These stories motivated my master's thesis on missionary mothers across the ages, developed with empirical and qualitative data (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2015).

Recent conversations with a woman serving in ministry alongside her husband in Ghana and the son of ministers in Nigeria are the latest examples, following earlier historical ones such as the families of Black and Coloured Dutch Reformed ministers and missionaries sent within South Africa (Jonas 2022). These examples are not systematic evidence and cannot tell us how widespread this practice is, but I find them alarming. As Global South churches and practitioners spearhead a new wave of mission initiatives, I fear that families may inherit structures in which ministry demands again come at the expense of children's wellbeing and maternal care.

I suspect that, in some mission contexts, motherless assumptions, urgency to "evangelise the world in this generation," results-oriented priorities, and expectations of Christ's imminent return can converge as a broader theology and orientation to mission, diminishing attention to local realities, long-term consequences, and institutional responsibility, Samuel Escobar's term, *managerial missiology* describes the epoch (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2024a). At stake is whether maternal agency and care are recognised and resourced in mission theology and practice. How might *maternal-thinking* help mission communities recognise and support the embodied and relational work of mothering?[2]

About two-thirds of the world's Christians live in the Global South (Johnson and Zurlo 2019), a shift that F. Lionel Young III traces in his forthcoming history of the Christian faith, *The Surprising Work of God: A New History of World Christianity* (Young forthcoming). Brazil and South Korea are now among the largest sending countries after the United States (Johnson and Zurlo 2019). Sending within the Global South

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[2] My theological perspective draws especially on Juliana Claassens's *Mourner, mother, midwife* (2012) and Amy Peeler's *Women and the gender of God* (2022). My historical perspective on women and mothers in mission draws especially on Dana Robert's *American women in mission* (1997).

also has its own history, including the families of Black and Coloured Dutch Reformed ministers and missionaries sent within South Africa (Jonas 2022).

The organisations at the centre of my critique are what I call Religious Branded Organisations (RBOs): independent, often nondenominational mission organisations, especially US-based, whose policies and structures reflect US legal and cultural assumptions, including an understanding of equality as sameness that leaves little room for the maternal body (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2023).[3]

The Christian West has tended to approach mission from a monocultural point of view and then to apply its concepts and practices in a universalising fashion, as a dominant culture view. As mission initiatives increasingly emerge from the Global South in an era of mission "from everywhere to everyone," the legacy of Western mission, and especially of the current US-based RBOs, may persist in assumptions about mission, family, gender, and care (on Western missionary families, see Baker and Priest 2014); I therefore raise a red flag: unless these assumptions are critically examined, mothers and those who undertake mothering may continue to be marginalised and to bear disproportionate practical, financial, spiritual, and emotional costs.

My aim is less to criticise mission than to describe the structures and systems of which it is part, often without awareness, and I do not reject its complex legacy. I do not endorse replacing family ties with church ties, but I read the emphasis as a feature of the mission model rather than of individual intent. The article addresses mission agencies, especially US-based agencies whose templates have shaped mission elsewhere, as well as churches, educators, and practitioners in both the Global North and the Global South.

Western-led mission movements contributed significantly to the worldwide spread of Christianity and carried ideals such as literacy and education, the belief that all people are created in the image of God, and human equality, even as they were often entangled with colonial and imperial projects. The presence of these ideals does not erase the harms of mission history, nor does their uneven realisation negate their significance. Rather than assigning blame, the article examines one place where these structures show: the treatment of maternal agency and care. We cannot modify what we cannot see. That is the logic for using scholars outside of the Christian faith, who aid in identifying structures and systems in which Christian missions are embedded.

The article offers a practical-theological synthesis that brings together my published work on *maternal-thinking* and *motherlessness*, a bounded Colombian case study, and

[3] RBO is a category I develop in 'World Christianity needs new tools' (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2026d).

selected historical examples.[4] As practical theology, the article moves between lived experience, theological interpretation, and practice. It is not a new empirical study or a comprehensive literature review. The article asks what these sources together reveal about maternal agency in the *missio Dei* and what they may mean for global mission practice and policy.[5]

After setting out its theological grounding and key terms, the article proceeds in four movements: it first examines Western mission assumptions that can marginalise maternal agency; then considers how this logic appears in a Colombian congregation; next, it highlights the contribution of mothers and mothering to the preservation of Christian faith; and finally, it lists practical implications for mission practice, family care, and resourcing.

Theological Grounding and Key Terms

If God is described in maternal as well as paternal terms, then maternal agency belongs among the places where the missio Dei can be discerned, not at its margins. Christian theology speaks of God with both paternal and maternal imagery. Alongside the language of God as Father, Scripture portrays God in maternal terms, as in the image of God comforting people as a mother comforts her child (Isa. 66:13; Claassens 2012; Rheinbolt-Uribe 2017; Peeler 2022). A motherly Father could be an acceptable way to understand the Godhead across Christian traditions.

These theological foundations ground my use of *maternal-thinking* as a lens for considering the *missio Dei* in light of both biblical imagery of God's maternal character and the lives and practices of mothers and other maternal figures. Here, *missio Dei* refers to God's work beyond human institutions, reaching humans and nonhuman creation.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's phrase, "[a] natural power we carry within ourselves" (2003:386), captures the embodied dimension of maternal agency. Here, "mothers"

[4] As I have argued in my dissertation, *Transforming mutuality in a theology of mission* (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2023), and in 'Maternal-thinking, missio Dei, and managerial missiology' (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2024a) and 'Maternal-thinking and Ubuntu' (Freeks and Rheinbolt-Uribe 2025), *maternal-thinking* helps bring these dynamics into view.

[5] My standpoint is informed by research with women in Global South contexts. Drawing on my case study of ICI-Colombia, I examine how one US-based mission organisation's assumptions about maternity and mothering were treated as universal and shaped understandings and practices in this particular Colombian context. The case is bounded to this congregation and organisation and does not represent all mission organisations or all Global South contexts. I discuss Colombia's matricentric context in 'Mapping the matricentric' (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2025d) and in 'Maternal-thinking, missio Dei, and managerial missiology' (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2024a). The issue, however, extends beyond this case.

refers to biological and adoptive mothers, while "mothering" refers more broadly to the practices of people who undertake mothering or parenting (Freeks and Rheinbolt-Uribe 2026). Sara Ruddick's framework of *maternal-thinking* identifies three concerns of maternal work: "preservation, growth, and social acceptance" (1995:17). Building on Ruddick, I use a fourfold maternal practice that adds "release," or letting go, to complete the arc from preservation and nurture to release (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2024b:7, 13–14).

The *maternal commons* names communal life grounded in embodied, relational care and mutual aid, enacted in these four maternal practices, as I develop in 'Contested bodies and imperial logics' (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2026b). It is not an institution, doctrine, or programme but a relational practice that precedes and exceeds imperial management. Theologically, it rests on the *imago Dei* understood as relational and kenotic; socio-politically, it appears in vernacular, face-to-face spaces where these practices persist outside institutional management.[6]

The maternal terminology used here is not biologically reductionist. Maternal imagery for God is theological language, not a claim that God is biologically female (or male) (Peeler 2022). Nor is maternal practice confined to biological maternity or to women: it names relational practices of care that may be undertaken by adoptive mothers and other committed caregivers (O'Reilly 2024). Many practices central to Christian life, such as tending the sick, feeding the hungry, accompanying the dying, and sharing with those experiencing poverty, resonate with practices of mothering, without implying that such care belongs exclusively to women or mothers. I also recognise the significance of maternal agency without idealising motherhood or assuming that mothers' influence is inherently benign. The point is that maternal care and agency have often been overlooked in accounts of Christian mission and the formation of faith.

Although *maternal-thinking* overlaps with some feminist concerns, I approach it from a womanist, community-centred perspective attentive to women, families, and communities (Kanyoro 2002; Chilisa 2020; Crowder 2016). The perspective is in conversation with Kiboko's (2001:213) account of *thinking-with-the-womb* as expressed in Sanga women's biblical interpretation. I bring these African and Black women's perspectives into conversation without treating them as interchangeable.

Based on the above, I believe that Christians of all traditions can unite under the affirmation that the Godhead is understood as a Motherly Father.

[6] I apply the idea to a Colombian congregation in 'Beyond the walls' (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2026a; Rheinbolt-Uribe and Freeks 2026).

First: Western Motherlessness

Roles based on the male body have often been treated as the "ideal" in Western society. At this point in history women are expected to function as "alternate males" or "genderless men" within what Ivan Illich calls the "regime of economic sex," in which industrial society rests on "unisex assumptions" (Illich 1983:10–13). I use *unisex regime* as shorthand for the institutional logic I read in that critique: a supposedly universal norm that obscures embodied difference.

A specific example of the unisex regime is the legal treatment of maternity in the United States. Men and women are formally equal under the law, so federal law gives maternity little specific support, and employers and individual states largely set their own policies. The Family and Medical Leave Act provides eligible employees with up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave, and only where the employer has at least 50 employees and the worker has been employed for at least 12 months and 1,250 hours (US Department of Labor 2025). There is no federal paid maternity leave. The approach differs from that of many other countries; Colombia, for example, provides 18 weeks of paid maternity leave, the first 12 reserved for the mother and the final six shareable between parents (Angulo, Webster and Rosseau 2021). A model that treats women and men as the same can leave little room for the maternal body, and organisations that take such a model as their template may carry that gap into other contexts.

Forced feminism, which I coined*,* names a model that empowers women structurally while expecting them to conform to norms modelled on men's lives, without adequately attending to how maternal embodiment and mothering shape women's agency (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2025c). I do not mean to criticise women's leadership or empowerment; it points to something more profound, the ideal of *motherlessness*. Literary and psychoanalytic work on motherless creation (Nielsen 2022) and *womb envy* (Easlea 1983) points in the same direction, toward ways of imagining creation apart from women's reproductive bodies.

In 'I was trained to be a man' (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2025c), I trace my own formation within masculine norms in Christian mission and my efforts to unlearn them with maternal perspectives. Together, these ideas frame the Colombian case, which illustrates how related assumptions appeared in one mission setting, without suggesting that all Western or Global South mission organisations operate in the same way.

Second: Mission Methods and Maternal Agency in a Colombian Congregation

The section revisits findings from my case study of ICI-Colombia, a single congregation planted in 1992 by a US-based mission organisation (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2023). It considers the congregation's experience of the denomination's mission methods, based on the ideals of the church growth movement, and the consequences of the international collapse of its mission agency in 2003. I reread this bounded case with a *maternal-thinking* lens, asking what the methods recognised, and what they failed to recognise, about maternal agency and care. It is a reconsideration of a previously published case study, not a new empirical study.

The denomination's mission theology and methods were developed in the United States and understood to be universal. Research into local cultures, including anthropology, sociology, and history, was not encouraged. Although missiology recognises the importance of such research, this principle was not followed in the denomination's practice.

The case study of ICI-Colombia found that the prescribed mission method discouraged young converts from remaining close to their parents, drawing on a literal interpretation of Jesus' words in Luke 14:26: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple" (NIV). Such readings of scripture, taken out of context, show how the image of family can be turned against actual families (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2023:233). The denomination's US-based mission theology and methods prioritised kinship with the denominational "church family" over biological kinship. Such an emphasis contrasted with the Colombian cultural context examined in the study, where family life was generally centred on mothers (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2025c).

I read this emphasis critically. The tension between denominational allegiance and family ties matters here less for its own sake than for what it shows: a mission model can prioritise institutional belonging without adequately recognising maternal agency and care. Applying *maternal-thinking* helped me recognise that the congregation had been built on what I call "sacred ground": the role and place of mothers in Colombian life (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2023).

Although women and men held leadership roles, the method could redirect members' allegiance from their mothers to church leaders. Women were encouraged to place their confidence and allegiance in a female leader, while men were encouraged to do so in a male leader. In this case study, I was the female leader, a 25-year-old single woman when the congregation was planted in 1992. I have described this church-

planting approach as forced feminism in a unisex regime (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2024a). It empowered women within the church structure but did not adequately recognise or accommodate maternal agency, including how women's embodied lives and relationships with children, whether biological, adopted, or otherwise mothered, shaped their lives and commitments (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2024a).

In this congregation, however, many mothers joined their children. Rather than opposing their children's involvement in the denomination, they "leaned in" and became part of the congregation. I see a parallel in the life of Mary, Jesus' mother. Mark's Gospel depicts her concern about Jesus' actions and ministry (Mark 3:21, 31), while the book of Acts shows her joining his followers (Acts 1:14) (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2024b).

Maternal presence was also nurtured in *Nohemi*, a group formed for mothers and grandmothers and named after Ruth's mother-in-law. The women gathered for mutual support, shared teaching, and discipleship, including discussion of concerns such as menopause, relationship with adult children, to name a few.

During the crisis, the *Nohemi* group's significance became especially visible (further research would be important to provide more detailed data). Some family units centred around mothers remained active in the congregation, where mothers continued to open their homes, cook, teach, and offer counselling. Other households left together, either joining another congregation or meeting as a house church. The pattern merits further study and should not be treated as generalisable. The case nevertheless suggests that mothers' hospitality, teaching, and care helped sustain communal life.

In parallel, I see the *missio Dei* in practices that recall the contributions of mothers in the Jesus movement described in Acts. These include opening homes and sharing food for daily fellowship (Acts 2:42–47), hosting prayer meetings during a crisis (Acts 12:12, where many people had gathered to pray at the house of Mary, the mother of John, also called Mark), and sharing the risks of belonging to the movement. Acts 8:3 describes Saul dragging both men and women from their homes and putting them in prison. I read these and other examples in the book of Acts from a woman's point of view (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2014).

The Colombian case shows how methods developed in the US and assumed to be universal, without the local research that missiology itself recommends, overlooked the maternal agency imbedded in the culture. When the mission agency collapsed in 2003, that agency did not disappear. Mothers and grandmothers kept homes open,

contributed to sustaining communal life. The case raises a wider question: how have maternal forms of care and agency contributed to the preservation and transmission of Christian faith in other times and places? The next section turns to selected historical and textual examples, including Philip Jenkins's account of women's role in preserving Christian communities under persecution.

Third: Maternal Commons and the Preservation of Christian Faith

The accusation that Christianity suppressed women should be taken seriously, but it does not capture the full complexity of Christian history. The historical record also includes evidence of women's agency and maternal care in the preservation and transmission of Christian faith. These contributions may be less visible in academic mission history as ordinary or taken for granted (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2015; Robert 2019:190). I read these forms of care and influence as expressions of the *missio Dei*.

Recognising maternal agency requires asking not only who carry children in their bodies and give birth, but who undertakes the time, effort, love, and creativity involved in raising children. Truly the mother–child bond is real, profound, and in some ways mysterious (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2025a). Because children shape the future, Christian communities should recognise the importance of this work and the shared responsibility for nurturing the next generation, not just in Sunday school or orphanages but at the centre of Christian families, and especially the families of mission practitioners.

Missio Dei can be observed across Christian history particularly during times of persecution and crisis, when mothers sustained and nurtured their communities. These roles have been recorded in different ways. Jenkins (2008) revisits the "lost history" of Christianity in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. He describes the "destruction of churches and Christian communities" (Jenkins 2008:28) and notes that "women were a critical factor in preserving underground faith" (Jenkins 2008:176). Through a *maternal-thinking* lens, Jenkins's discussion points to biological mothers (Jenkins 2008:63, 176) and spiritual mothers (Jenkins 2008:73) as contributing to the continuation of the Christian faith, even amid extreme persecution.

In my empirical research with Colombian Christians in the Colombian case study, most participants identified their mothers and grandmothers as the first people who taught them about faith in God (Rheinbolt-Uribe and Freeks 2026). Their accounts also conveyed the profound spiritual influence of their mothers and grandmothers and the communal character of their upbringing, which often involved extended family. The *Nohemi* group offers one example of maternal agency taking communal form in the formation of faith.

Kat Armas (2021:12*)* answers the question: "What if the world's greatest theologians are those whom the world wouldn't consider theologians at all?" presenting *abuela theology* or grandmother theology. Her account of *abuela theology* draws on the kitchen theology she experienced from her own grandmother. Her account resonates with the results of my research in the Colombia case study and the possibility that we miss important theological insight when we do not listen closely to the maternal figures in our communities.

Not to be naive, throughout history (including biblical history) mothers have also been the power behind the power; not only power for the spiritual but also for worldly and evil pursuits. All mothers, as all people, experience brokenness and are in need of continual transformation. If their empowerment in a community is not acknowledged or recognised, a large part of the puzzle will be missing for comprehension.

In the case study, despite the mission methods, a special focus was given to the *Nohemi group.* Many of these women not only sustained the congregation in crisis but also were pivotal for planting and sustaining congregations in their hometowns and cities.

Fourth: Implications for Global Mission and Missionary Families

The preceding sections point to practical implications for mission practitioners, leaders, agencies, churches, theological educators, and researchers. They are not universal prescriptions; they require discernment in light of local laws, cultural practices, and the needs of particular families. Responsibility does not rest with institutions alone: each person must consider the assumptions and choices they participate in, and the consequences these may have for others.

1. Include the maternal in theological education. The opening discussion of paternal and maternal imagery for God suggests a need to study biblical and theological accounts of God's maternal aspects, and the knowledge that emerges from mothering and communal care. Such study can help broaden mission theology beyond assumptions that make male experience the unmarked norm.

2. Recognise maternal care and the *maternal commons* as part of mission. The *Nohemi* group illustrates how mothers' and grandmothers' teaching, hospitality, companionship, and discipleship can sustain a congregation and contribute to mission. Agencies and churches should recognise and resource this work rather than treating it as informal support that women will provide

without recognition, and should make room for the full maternal arc, including "release."

3. Develop mission methods and policies with local communities and families. The Colombian case shows how methods presented as universal can overlook local family relationships and maternal agency. Agencies should consult local women and families, draw on cultural and historical research, and avoid asking women to fit their embodied maternal lives into structures not designed with those lives in view. The image of family itself calls for caution: the term is complex, can easily be manipulated, and may mean different things to different cultural groups (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2023:233). Policies should also be clear and responsive to context. Agencies should understand the labour and parental-leave protections in each country and clarify in writing how they apply to personnel. In a case I analysed, a practitioner and her husband were dismissed a month before the birth of their child (Rheinbolt-Uribe 2018).

   Agencies should also take local postpartum practices seriously. In Colombia, *cuarentena* is a 40-day period of rest and care for a new mother, ideally supported by her mother or another close female relative. I did not understand this practice in my early experience in Colombia, but when I had twins, I finally understood. Related questions, such as ties to extended family across borders and the effect of funding interruptions on family support, are best settled in writing before relocation, not left to families to solve during childbirth, illness, or crisis.

   Women's accounts in Terence Mupangwa's (2026) conference paper describe families left without stable housing during denominational conflict, which shows why appeals to "trust God" must not replace clear communication and practical support. Much more specific research of this kind is needed on the crises and challenges facing mission initiatives spearheaded from the Global South.

4. Commit to reciprocal learning and mutuality. As Bosch describes in 'Towards true mutuality: exchanging the same commodities or supplementing each others' needs?' (1978), mutuality involves learning from one another (see also Rheinbolt-Uribe 2026c). Western Christians and mission practitioners need to learn from the experience and wisdom of the Global South, while Global South practitioners can also learn from Western histories, mistakes, and critiques. Such learning should continue in conferences, books, historical accounts, and attention to lived experience, and should include children and adults raised in

missionary families whose perspectives affirm, complicate, or critique the institutions and forms of faith that shaped them. The 2026 Ralph D. Winter Memorial Lectureship, *Children in Missionary Families: Stories of Pain, Hope, and Resilience*, is one example of a conference addressing these experiences.

Taken together, these recommendations call for more than recognising maternal agency; they ask mission agencies and churches to shape their practices and policies around the realities of family life, embodied difference, and the care that sustains communities. It is vital that the growing Global South mission movements not repeat these mistakes. Who will rise to this task?

Conclusion

The practical-theological synthesis has brought theological reflection on maternal imagery and agency into conversation with a Colombian case study and selected historical and current examples. Together, these show that maternal practices of teaching, care, hospitality, discipleship, and release can help sustain Christian faith, while mission methods may overlook or diminish those forms of agency when they impose universal assumptions about family, gender, and church belonging. The Colombian case is bounded and cannot stand for all mission contexts, but it makes visible questions that merit wider attention.

The article does not reject the complex legacy of Western mission, which has contributed to the worldwide spread of Christianity and carried ideals such as education, the *imago Dei*, and human equality, even as it has been entangled with colonial and imperial projects. It calls instead for honest, mutual learning about both contributions and failures, with particular attention to the treatment of maternal agency. If we care about the future of Christian faith, we must hold two truths together: local communities can sustain faith beyond the presence of a mission agency or transnational practitioner, and those practitioners and their families still deserve responsible, transparent care. Local resilience must not become an excuse for institutional neglect.

The question is both theological and practical. In the spirit of 1 Peter 3:15, “in your hearts set Christ apart [as holy—acknowledging Him, giving Him first place in your lives] as Lord. Always be ready to give a [logical] defence to anyone who asks you to account for the hope and confident assurance [elicited by faith] that is within you, yet [do it] with gentleness and respect” (AMP), individuals and institutions alike should be ready to give an account of the hope that shapes their mission decisions, including to those who will live with their consequences. What might change if maternal agency

were recognised not as peripheral to the *missio Dei*, but as one of the places from which Christians learn to discern and practise it?

If mission is indeed the "mother of theology," then mission itself is called to mother well: to preserve, nurture, and prepare others for acceptance and release rather than control. I hope and pray that mission practice and policy will grow in that direction. The God whom mission serves is described in Scripture as one who comforts as a mother comforts: "As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you" (Isa. 66:13). Every corner of our world, in the West and the Global South alike, yearns for that comfort.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Christian Friedrich Schwartz and the Public Impact of His Missionary Service in South India and England (1750–1813)

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Abstract: Christian Friedrich Schwartz was a German Lutheran Pietist missionary who worked among the Tamil people in southern India from 1750 to 1798. He witnessed the English East India Company's unstoppable rise and transformation from a mercantile enterprise to a colonial governing power. He came to Tranquebar in 1750l twelve years later, at the invitation of the English military officers and soldiers, he joined the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, which had Anglican roots. His lifestyle radiating values and honesty persuaded the Hindu and Muslim rulers to seek his diplomatic services. The Company sent him as its emissary to Hyder Ali and other stakeholders. Amid his tireless public service, he remained a Lutheran missionary, establishing churches and schools, training catechists, ordaining Tamil pastors, and directing their work. After his death, the Company erected a marble monument in St. Mary's Church in Fort St. George (now in Chennai). King Serfoji, Schwartz's adopted son, likewise built two monuments, one in marble and the other in granite, and placed them in two churches in Thanjavur. This essay examines, for the first time, the content of these three monuments and places them within the larger context of Schwartz's public ministry. It draws on archival documents held in the famous Mission Archives of the Francke Foundations (AFSt/M) in Halle (Saale), Germany, and the India Office Records and Private Papers (IOR) at the British Library in London, England. My most recent biography of Schwartz (2025) sheds further light on all persons, places, processes and events mentioned in this essay.

Keywords: Christian Friedrich Schwartz, German Lutheran Pietist Missionary, Tranquebar Mission, Kingdom of Tanjore, Serfoji II, Eighteenth-century Southern India, Marble Funerary Monuments

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An earlier version of this article, titled "Speaking Monuments for Christian Friedrich Schwartz and His Christianity in Public Places of Eighteenth-Century Southern India," appeared in *Indian Church History Review*, Vol. 58, No. 1, 2024, pp. 28–46. The present article retains the central arguments of the earlier version, adopts a new title and expands the discussion with additional evidence and analysis. Printed with the permission of the earlier publisher.

Introduction

The largest marble monument in St. Mary's Church, built in 1680 as Asia's first Anglican church, commemorates the public achievements of Christian Friedrich Schwartz (1726–1798), a renowned German Lutheran Pietist missionary who worked for the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK, 1698). He demonstrated the importance of his Christian convictions in the public spheres of his time through diplomacy, advocacy, and sacrificial service. This essay examines the marble monument's contents and situates them within Schwartz's ministry among South Indians, from his arrival in Cuddalore on 17 July 1750 to his death on 13 February 1798. It draws its insights primarily from the archival materials held in the famous Mission Archives of the Francke Foundations in Halle (Saale), Germany (AFSt/M), and the India Office Records of the British Library in London, England (IOR); it incorporates these insights into the published representations of Schwartz's life and ministry to provide a fuller picture of his lived religion in public spheres.

Schwartz's Missionary Calling

This monument states that Schwartz, as "a Protestant Missionary from the Government of Denmark, and in the same character by the Society in England for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge," continuously tried to "imitate the example of his blessed Master, Jesus Christ." This reference summarises Schwartz's primary function as a German Lutheran Pietist missionary. All his predecessors, beginning with Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau, who reached the Danish colony of Tranquebar (1620–1845) on 9 July 1706, were the covenanted 'employees' of King Friedrich IV of Denmark,[2] not of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark.[3] They were answerable to him and the Mission College which he had constituted (1714). The

[2] Anders Nørgaard, a pioneer in the study of the Tranquebar Mission, sent the author of this essay an email on 30 December 2005 and pointed out the meaning of *rite vocatus* in the 14th Article of the Augsburg Confession: "no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called." Accordingly, the Danish Lutheran Church could ordain only qualified and competent candidates as pastors, whom the local congregations in Denmark selected and called. They had no mandate to ordain uninvited missionaries for a people outside of Denmark. To solve this ecclesiastical problem, King Friedrich IV turned to two sources: theologically, he followed Martin Luther's Small Catechism, which requires the head of the household to teach his household, in the simplest terms, Lutheran beliefs and practices. The king understood himself as the head of his country and overseas colonies. Politically, he followed the *cura religionis* principle of the Peace of Westphalia (1648), which allowed rulers and magistrates to ensure the state religion's beliefs and practices in their realms.

[3] The Danish Lutheran Church started its first missionary wing, the *Danish Missionary Society*, in 1821. They employed Carl Christoph Ernst Ochs (1812–1873), who had earlier worked as a missionary of the Leipzig Evangelical Lutheran Church in and around Cuddalore. To establish a caste-less church, he separated his congregation and approached the *Danish Missionary Society* for help. As a result, this Society became an integral part of the contemporary Arcot Lutheran Church, headquartered in Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu.

king required the Danish bishops to examine and ordain the missionary candidates, most of whom were from Germany. Hence, Schwartz and his two companions, David Polzenhagen (1726–1756) and Georg Heinrich Conrad Hüttemann (1728–1781), were ordained on 6 September 1749 by Bishop Peder Hersleb (1689–1757) of the Danish Lutheran Church in Copenhagen. After visiting London, England, for a few days, they sailed from there to Cuddalore. On their arrival in Cuddalore on 17 July 1750, the veteran Swedish Lutheran missionary Johann Zacharias Kiernander (1711–1799) welcomed and accompanied them to Tranquebar, where they arrived on 31 July 1750.

Schwartz's Ministerial Contexts

Schwartz ministered for twelve years (1750–1762) in Tranquebar, and became acquainted with his predecessors' missionary methods, the people's two main languages (Tamil and Portuguese), their belief systems, temple rituals, customary practices and the (nominal) lifestyle of Tamil Lutherans and Catholics. He considered his time in Tranquebar a period of learning. At the invitation of the British army officers stationed in Tiruccirāppaḷḷi, the residence of the Nawab of Carnatic at that time[4], Schwartz ministered to the European Christian soldiers there. During his service from February to March 1762, he gained a new vision for ministry and intensified his work among the British soldiers (AFSt/M 1B52:14).

The military officers observed how passionately and empathetically Schwartz conducted his pastoral ministry among the soldiers, especially the wounded. They therefore asked their superiors to persuade Schwartz to remain indefinitely in Tiruccirāppaḷḷi and serve as their chaplain. Schwartz's confessional background, his ordination vow, and his dedication to serving in Tranquebar troubled his conscience. As soon as he realised the prospects of a small school for European orphan children with two salaried teachers and the possibility of establishing a permanent place for Lutheran worship, he made up his mind. Consequently, in 1767, the SPCK accepted him as their missionary. His service transcended the doctrinal differences between Lutherans and Anglicans, and he saw this change as God's will. By then, the Mission College in Copenhagen and Lutheran missionaries in Tranquebar and Madras agreed that Schwartz could move to Tiruccirāppaḷḷi (AFSt/M 1B57:15).

Meanwhile, Johann Wilhelm Berg, from Hamburg, Germany, served as a captain in the army of King Pratāpasimha of Tanjore (ruled 1739–1763). Berg continued his service to King Tulaji (ruled 1763-1784), the eldest son of King Pratāpasimha. Berg invited

[4] On 26 August 1752, the army of the East India Company defeated Chanda Sahib and the French in Tiruccirāppaḷḷi. Muhammad Ali Khan Wallajah (1717–1795) became the undisputed Nawab of Arcot and began to live in Tiruccirāppaḷḷi.

Schwartz to minister to German soldiers (1764–1769) in his army. Likewise, Major John Wood of the Company's army in Tiruccirāppaḷḷi also asked Schwartz to accompany him on his visits to King Tulaji (1768, 1771, etc.). He closely observed Schwartz's behaviour, honesty in translating conversations and the firmness of his decisions. Therefore, King Tulaji wanted Schwartz to settle in Tanjore as his trusted interpreter. Schwartz had another opportunity to meet the king at the wedding ceremony of Berg's daughter in the palace in 1772. Schwartz's solemnisation of the marriage and his conduct of the entire service impressed the king. Schwartz became Tulaji's confidant during his imprisonment (1773–1776) and his re-enthronement in 1776. Tulaji's diplomatic relationship with Schwartz persuaded him to relocate to Tanjore (1778). Tulaji trusted Schwartz so much that, just before his death in January 1787, he entrusted his adopted son, Serfoji II, to him, asking him to protect, educate and enthrone him as his successor. By then, Schwartz had become a trusted interpreter because, in addition to German, Latin, Hebrew, Greek and English, he also knew Tamil, Portuguese, Persian and Marathi. He used his linguistic skills to promote peace and justice.

Schwartz's Role in Promoting 'Temporal and Eternal Welfare'

The monument's opening lines summarised Schwartz's calling as a missionary and his institutional affiliations. The monument further states that he embraced "every opportunity of promoting both the temporal and eternal Welfare of others." He demonstrated his religious convictions "not with a gloomy Aspect or forbidding mien," and they manifested themselves "with a graceful Form and placid Dignity." His annual salary was small, but he invested it in establishing churches, schools, and seminaries in Tanjore (modern Thanjavur), Rāmanāthapuram, and Tirunelveli. The monument makes this unparalleled declaration:

> "Beloved and honoured by Europeans, he was, if possible, held in still deeper Reverence by the Natives of this country, of every degree and every sect; And their unbounded Confidence in his Integrity and Truth was, on many occasions rendered highly beneficial to the Public Service; the poor and the injured looked up to him as an unfailing friend and advocate; the great and powerful concurred in yielding him the highest homage ever paid in this Quarter of the Globe to European Virtue. The late Hyder Ally Cawn in the midst of a bloody and vindictive war with the Carnatic, sent orders to his Officers "to Permit the venerable Father Swartz to pass unmolested and shew him Respect and Kindness, for he is a Holy Man and means no harm to my Government.'"

Representative examples of Schwartz's public ministry would help us to better understand the text on this monument. European soldiers and their senior officers trusted Schwartz.

Beloved and Honoured by Europeans

Schwartz interacted with three types of Europeans associated with the English East India Company (henceforth written as Company): soldiers, military officers and civil servants. He taught English soldiers stationed in the forts at Tiruccirāppaḷḷi, Thanjavur and Vallam to read and write and conducted Bible studies and worship services. He provided them with much-needed counselling and emotional support. The tomb stones in the Christ Church in Tiruccirāppaḷḷi, the Christ Church, St. Peter's Church, and the St. Peter's Cemetery in Tanjore, and at the ruined church wall in the Fort Vallam indicate that most soldiers were under twenty-five years of age.[5] On 14 October 1784, Schwartz reported that Governor George McCartney refused to pay the soldiers the usual bonus, which they had not received for several months. Many of them rebelled and starved. Schwartz procured food for them and chided the colonial administration for its exploitative, oppressive injustice (AFSt M 1B75:23). As mercenaries, they wanted to earn quick money, become wealthy and support their poor parents and siblings in Britain. They saw Schwartz as their spiritual father; someone they could confide their anxieties to and from whom they could receive moral courage.

Schwartz's biographies illustrate his frequent interactions with military leaders such as Major Achilles Preston (1762–1764) and Major John Wood (1764–1768) in Tiruccirāppaḷḷi, Major William Stevens (1769) and Major Hector Munro (1799) in Thanjavur, General William Fullarton (1784) in Coimbatore, and Governor General Charles Cornwallis (1793) in Madras. Wood laid the foundation for Christ Church in Tiruccirāppaḷḷi (13 March 1765) and appointed him executor of his will (3 July 1774).[6] Munro laid the foundation for the Christ Church in Thanjavur (10 March 1779, AFSt/M 1B70:43) and introduced Schwartz to Governor Thomas Rumbold in Madras, who in turn sent him as his envoy to Hyder Ali. Fullarton was so thrilled to have met Schwartz and exclaimed that the "knowledge and integrity of this irreproachable Missionary have retrieved the character of Europeans from imputations of general depravity."[7]

[5] Cotton, Julian James: *List of Inscriptions on Tombs or Monuments in Madras Possessing Historical or Archaeological Interest*, rev. ed., Vol. 2, Madras: Government Press, 1946.

[6] Germann, Wilhelm: *Missionar Christian Friedrich Schwartz:* Sein Leben und Wirken aus Briefen des Halleschen Missionsarchivs, Erlangen: Deichert, 1870, pp. 156–158 & 234.

[7] Fullarton, William: *A View of the English Interests in India and an account of the military operations in the Southern Parts of the Peninsula during the Campaigns of 1782, 1783, and 1784* [...], London: T. Cadell, 1787, p. 183.

Schwartz assisted important Company's civil servants in Thanjavur: in August 1786, Resident John Hudleston and Paymaster John Coxe Hippisley invited Schwartz to become a full member of the Committee of Inspection (IOR/P/252/10, pp. 1580–91). They consulted with Schwartz on every occasion and took "no step of the least importance without his previous concurrence and approbation" (IOR/H/285A, p. 923). On 4 February 1794, Schwartz reported that he had voluntarily performed the duties of the Company's Resident in Tanjore for two years and had not received any salary for it. Normally, a resident earned 7,000 Star-Pagodas (= £3,000) as his annual salary (New Halle Report, Issue 47, 1795, p. 998).

Beloved and Honoured by Indians

Both Christian and non-Christian Indians trusted Schwartz because he was honest in his dealings with them. Most Christians, who had embraced Christianity, hailed from lower socioeconomic strata of Tamil society, who, as victims of millennia-old hierarchical, birth-based segregating systems of *varna* ('colour,' behavioural categories) and *jāti* ('blood-relatives'), endured misfortune and misery. As they joined Lutheran congregations, these new converts still clung to the social dignities *varna* and *jāti* conferred on them and maintained social interactions based on inequality and untouchability. Schwartz realised he could not abolish these age-old socio-religious systems of discrimination with a single stroke; instead, he encouraged his congregation members not to eat the meat of fallen animals and to keep themselves ritually pure, especially on Sundays before taking the Holy Communion. He quoted to them an ancient Tamil proverb to highlight the absurdity of observing *jāti* distinctions: "At the entrance to heaven, both the sweeper (*tōṭṭi*) and the ruler (*toṇṭaimāṉ*) are treated the same way" (Germann, 1870, p. 273). This other-worldly proverb did not help his congregation members to give up *varna* and *jāti*-distinctions in their social interaction.

Christian Pohle, one of Schwartz's younger missionary colleagues, opposed Schwartz's tolerance of varna and jāti distinctions and discrimination. Pohle claimed that his congregation members were different. He administered the Eucharist equally to all church members, regardless of their *jāti* identity. The Table of the Lord was not the place to promote their *jāti*-pride (AFSt/M 1B70:42).

In addition to these Christians, Schwartz selected and trained Indians as catechists, schoolmasters and co-workers, who struggled to live out their Christian identity in their socio-cultural contexts. He paid them from his own salary. By 17 December 1766, Schwartz supported three catechists: Dewanesen, Ignasimuttu and Södinaiken (AFSt/M 1B56:20). In Tiruchirappalli, he also supported other catechists, including

Vēdanāyagam ('Bible Master,' 1774–1864), who became a famous poet. His Tamil lyrics and other literary writings reflect Schwartz's teachings. For example, his work entitled *Ñāṉakummi* praises Schwartz as a noble teacher. He established schools for both Christian and non-Christian children in Thanjavur; some of the Christian children lived in the hostel he founded.

Among the non-Christians, the Kallar community in Thanjavur recognize him as their reforming father.[8] In 1776, he met a group of Kallar boys in Budalur, near Thanjavur, and advised them to give up their practice of professional stealing. He encouraged them to farm their land and earn their livelihood. Some Kallar community members heeded his advice; their example influenced others.[9]

When rulers, tax collectors and the Company's renters oppressed Thanjavur farmers with high taxes, Schwartz stepped in and began paving the way for a modern system of administering justice in Thanjavur. The *Regulating Act of India* (1773) and Pitt's India Act (1784) introduced seismic changes for the legal administration of justice in India: British judges began to apply British laws to Indians; gradually they learned to be mindful of the local customary practices (e.g., local rule by panchayats; personal laws according to the religious belonging of the person). After Ameer Singh became the King of Thanjavur on 7 April 1787, Governor Alexander Campbell and Schwartz contemplated the best ways to help Ameer Singh establish a court of justice distinct from the Tamil and Mughal law courts. At that time, Schwartz gave him the regulations that he had drafted earlier. On 10 April 1787, Campbell handed over these regulations to Ameer Singh and urged him to establish a court of justice (IOR/P/252/16, pp. 74–86). Accordingly, the new judges should be honest and impartial; they should not favour the rich and powerful and neglect the poor and weak.

Schwartz knew the harsh impact of wars that threatened the lives of common people. The wars left behind numerous widows, who needed work to earn their livelihood. On 20 February 1775, he announced that he had secured jobs for widows: they could thrash the paddy, separate the rice and provide it to a local hospital daily. He also arranged to have nine houses erected for the widows. Each house was nine feet long and nine feet wide (AFSt/ M 1B65:44). In February 1793, he tried to introduce silk production so the people of Thanjavur could earn a living (New Halle Reports, No. 44, 1795, p. 752). He enabled the widows of his congregations to weave clothes, trained

[8] In 1998, I, the author of this essay, met a senior Kallar-man in Thanjavur, whose ancestors encountered Schwartz. As a result, they abandoned their professional habit of stealing and became agriculturalists. This man called Schwartz "*eṅkaḷ appaṉ*" ('our father').

[9] For a detailed account of these Kallars, see *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt*, No. 16, 15th August 1853, pp. 233–239 and No. 17, 1st September 1853, pp. 249–250.

young women to knit and arranged buyers and sellers for these products (Germann, 1870, p. 361).

After Pitt's India Act of 1784, he allocated specific places to build hospitals in 1786 and appointed surgeons such as Nicol Mein in Tiruccirāppaḷḷi (IOR/P/252/9, pp. 942–948). In 1787, Mein inoculated "about twenty soldiers" against smallpox. These soldiers did not contract the disease. In January 1788, he inoculated more Europeans and their children.[10] Three years later, in 1791, some Christians whom Schwartz knew died of smallpox. He began convincing his followers to accept inoculation. He was successful after four years. On 7 March 1795, he reported that he had inoculated a few schoolchildren and that they did not get smallpox (*New Halle Reports*, No. 48, 1796, p. 1120). He wanted to apply modern medical discoveries to alleviate the suffering of common people.

Additionally, Schwartz was concerned about human deaths caused by snakebite and mad dogs. He himself miraculously escaped from poisonous snakes (Germann, 1870, p. 376). He began searching for antivenom and came across snake pills. He managed to get their ingredients (AFSt/M 2B1:7).[11] He passed them on to missionary Samuel Christopher John (1747–1813) in Tranquebar and requested him to contact his missionary colleague Johann Peter Rottler (1749–1836) in Madras and the famous botanist William Roxburgh (1751–1815). William Roxburgh received Rottler's *Instruction* and presented its English version, without naming Rottler, to the Company's Council in Madras on 16 September 1788 (IOR/P/252/27, pp. 2521–2524).

Meanwhile, in July 1778, Schwartz met Samuel, a Tamil Christian medical doctor said to have healed several people bitten by snakes. Schwartz told Strange, a Company surgeon near Tanjore, about Samuel and his snake pills. Thereafter, Schwartz and Strange asked Governor Archibald Campbell in Madras to arrange a discussion between Samuel and the medical doctors. At Schwartz's request, Samuel travelled to Madras, met the medical doctors, explained the components of his snake pills to them and arranged further testing (IOR/P/252/27, p. 2550). Samuel told them that he had taken his recipe from the "Chitter Rudum Shaster" (IOR/P/252/28, p. 3395), which the mendicants (*pandāram*) used. The English doctors took Samuel's opinion seriously; the presence of quicksilver alarmed them. Thanks to Schwartz's mediatory role,

[10] Brimnes, Niels: "Variolation, Vaccination and Popular Resistance in Early Colonial South India," *Medical History*, Vol. 24, 2004, pp. 199–228.

[11] The ingredients of the snake pill were the following: 1) *veḷḷai pāṣāṇam* ('white arsenic acid'), 2) *nir viṣam* (the plant *Curcuma Zedoaria*), 3) *nērvāḷam* (the plant *Croton tiglium*), 4) *racam* ('quicksilver'), 5) *miḷaku* (black 'pepper'), and 6) *veḷḷai erukkampāl* (the '*milk* of the [shrub white] *Calotropis gigantea*').

Samuel's snake pills attracted attention and paved the way for further research and improvements in antivenom.

Beyond snake pills, Schwartz sought a cure for rabies. His note to Samuel Christopher John (AFSt/ M 2B1:7) lists the ingredients Samuel might have given Schwartz. The chairperson of the Medical Board in Madras examined the ingredients and concluded that they were ineffective (IOR/P/252/28, pp. 3395–3096). Schwartz's willingness to participate in contemporary health-related discussions and activities merited attention and shows his commitment to improving the lives of ordinary human beings who have been subjected to various forms of suffering.

Schwartz's Diplomatic Efforts for Peace and Harmony

The monument in St. Mary's Church notes that the ruler of Mysuru, Hyder Ali, received and supported Schwartz as a peace ambassador and asked his army officers to protect him. Major Hector Munro of Thanjavur appointed him ambassador. Munro was so impressed by his character that, on his return to Madras, he persuaded Governor Thomas Rumbold (February 1778–April 1782) to appoint Schwartz as the Company's peace ambassador to Hyder Ali. Since 1766, Hyder Ali remained suspicious of Company officers, who promised to help him in emergencies and later broke their promises. Ali became furious when the Company took over his fort at *Mahé* on the Malabar Coast in southwestern India in March 1779; therefore, he planned to take revenge. Munro invited Schwartz to Madras and introduced him to Rumbold. Rumbold was known for his limitless greed and corruption. To satisfy Munro, he asked Schwartz to meet Ali in Seringapatam and find out his war intentions. Schwartz believed Munro's assurance and travelled from Tanjore to Seringapatam (5 June – 24 August 1799). Ali expressed his willingness to work with the Company if they honoured their promises to him (AFSt/ M 1B74: 31).

Schwartz told Ali that, as a priest, he accepted a political assignment to preserve and confirm peace. He was fully aware of the great "misery and horrors attendant on war." He wanted to help cement "a durable Friendship between the two Governments" and thus secure "the Blessings of Peace" to all. Hyder Ali responded "with great cordiality: Very well! Very well! I am of the same opinion as you, and I wish that the English may be as studious of Peace as you are. If they offer me the Hand of Peace and Concord, I shall not withdraw mine" (IOR ADD 57313 ff 37-42v).

Schwartz's personal interactions with Ali, who is otherwise portrayed as a ruthless tyrant, revealed the latter's humanity, professionalism and compassion towards the needy and orphans. At the same time, he punished those who betrayed his trust or

tried to cheat him. Schwartz's message of peace did not please Rumbold and his ally, the Nawab Wallajah, who were already determined to wage a war against Ali. Schwartz's message to Rumbold read as follows:

> "When I [Schwartz] came to Hyder, he desired me to sit down alongside him. The floor was covered with the most exquisite tapestry. He received me very politely, listened friendly and with seeming pleasure to all what I had to say. He spoke very openly and without reserve & said that the Europeans had broken their solemn engagements and promises, but that nevertheless he was willing to live in peace with them, provided ***. At last, he directed a letter to be wrote [sic], had it read unto me, and said: What I have spoken with you, that I have shortly mentioned in the letter. You will explain the whole more at length. (But the Nabob at Madras and others found means to frustrate all hopes of Peace.)" (IOR ADD 57313 ff 37-42v).

The three asterisks in the quote, not only in this English text but also in its German version, have puzzled scholars since Rumbold's time. They did not fully disclose what Hyder Ali had entrusted to him. Schwartz, as a pastor, communicated the message only to its intended recipient, Rumbold, and kept it from others.

Dissatisfied with Schwartz's emphasis on peace and friendliness, Rumbold sent George Grey as his envoy to Hyder Ali's court: he charged Grey with threatening Ali with war and compelling Ali to pay the Company large sums of money. Grey's *Journal of his Embassy to Hyder Ally in January 1780*[12] indicates how Ali refused to see him. Grey felt insulted and returned deeply disappointed. Ali knew of Rumbold's ulterior motives and attached Carnatic from 1780 to 1782. During this time, he ordered his army officers, as Schwartz's monument documented, to let Schwartz "pass unmolested." They should show him "Respect and Kindness" because he was "a Holy Man" and was not hostile towards his government.

This monument does not enumerate Schwartz's other mediatory efforts: for example, on 28 October 1782, he helped sign the *Rana Treaty* in Tanjore. The senior officers of the Wodeyar Dynasty of Mysore, whom Hyder Ali had deposed in 1766, met with the Company officers in Tanjore. The deposed Queen Lakshmi Ammani, widow of Krishnaraja Wodeyar II, sent her confidant, Tirumala Rao, to Governor Macartney of Madras. She promised to pay the Company. If the Company restored her to the Kingdom of Mysore, she agreed to pay large sums of money and entrust them with large parcels of land for revenue collection and administration. Tirumala Rao and

[12] IOR/H/250, pp. 1–19: this is Thomas Rumbold's copy of Gray's journal and bears the date 3 June 1782.

Macartney's council members drafted a treaty agreement. Macartney deputed John Sullivan, the Resident of Tanjore; J.C. Hippisley, the Assistant Resident in Tanjore; and C.F. Schwartz as the Company's representatives to meet with Tirumala Rao in Tanjore and reach a definitive conclusion. The reason for Schwartz's involvement in this committee is unknown. He served as the Company's official interpreter and an impartial witness for both parties. An unpublished handwritten copy of the introduction to these stipulations states that John Sullivan and J.C. Hippisley signed and affixed the Company's seal "in the presence of the Almighty God." Then comes the astonishing remark: "Signed and sealed in the presence of C.F. Swartz."[13] In other words, Schwartz's signature had an aura of sacredness.[14]

After this success, in November 1783, Macartney asked Schwartz to accompany his negotiators, whom he had sent to meet Tipu Sultan, the son of Hyder Ali, in Seringapatam. Tipu Sultan refused to allow Schwartz beyond *Satyamaṅkalam*; Schwartz returned to Tanjore on 27 January 1784 (Germann, 1870, p. 318). However, during this meeting Schwartz spent time with General William Fullarton and impressed him with his Christian witness and presence. In turn, he asked his soldiers to be mild toward their 'enemies'.[15] Schwartz's impact on Fullarton rippled through the soldiers.

Schwartz mediated between the king of Thanjavur and the farmers. Fearing heavy taxes, most farmers left their fields uncultivated; some emigrants settled in neighbouring places. On 17 July 1786, Schwartz explained (AFSt/M 1C27:5 and M 1C27:8, dated 2 October 1786) that King Tulāji and the Company's Committee of Inspection in Thanjavur wanted to avert a famine. Unable to convince the farmers to return to their fields and cultivate them, they asked Schwartz for help. Schwartz carefully guarded King Tulāji's dignity and promised to speak with the farmers on his behalf, not as a member of the Committee of Inspection. About 7,000 farmers trusted Schwartz, returned and cultivated their fields.

[13] Bodleian Library, India General Papers, Box 2: 1773–1779, p. 136 and the document bearing the number 8 with the date 28/10/1782.

[14] For a fuller version of the Rana Treaty, see Hayavadana Rao, Conjeeveram: *History of Mysore* 1399–1799, Vol. 3: 1766–1799, Bangalore: Government Press, 1946, pp. 11811187.

[15] Fullerton, 1787, p. 183: "On our second march we were visited by the Rev. Mr. Swartz, whom your Lordship and the Board [of the EIC in Fort St. George in Madras] requested to proceed to Seringapatam as a faithful interpreter between Tipoo and the Commissioners. The knowledge and integrity of this irreproachable Missionary have retrieved the character of Europeans from imputations of general depravity. A respectable escort attended him to the nearest encampment of the enemy; but he was stopped at Settimungulum [i.e., *Satyamaṅkalam*] and returned to Tanjore. I rejoice, however, that he undertook the business; for his journal which has been before the Board evinces, that the southern army acted towards our enemies with a mildness seldom experienced by friends in moments of pacification. From him also you learned that this conduct operated on the minds of inhabitants, who declared that we afforded them more secure protection than the commanders of their own troops."

On 20 December 1786 (AFSt/M 1C27:25), Schwartz expressed his abhorrence of the Company's bitter exploitation of the people of Tanjore. He stated that George Macartney's administration of Tanjore was evil and vicious because he and his subordinates threatened Tulāji and demanded large bribes. On receiving the bribe, they remained still for a while; yet other Company officers demanded larger bribes. Schwartz opined that the Governor-General of Bengal, Cornwallis, did not accept any bribes. Governor Campbell did not openly solicit bribes, but he was not free of avarice. He exploited Tulāji as much as he could.[16]

29 September 1787, Schwartz explained how he settled the migratory problems of the Tranquebar emigrants who faced three troubles: a severe storm battered Tranquebar from 17 to 21 May 1787. It destroyed the houses of several people (M 1C29b:29). Secondly, extreme poverty followed because most manual workers could not find adequate work. Some left Tranquebar and moved to the fertile areas of the Kingdom of Tanjore (AFSt/ M 1C28:72). Thirdly, some members of the "Salupper Caste" mistreated their domestic servants and agricultural labourers. These oppressed people moved into territories belonging to the Kingdom of Tanjore. Some members of the emigrant community regularly raided the agricultural fields within the domain of Tranquebar and vandalised the crops. Gradually, Governor Peter Hermann Abbestée (1779–1783, 1785–1788) and King Ameer Singh sought an agreement under which the emigrants would return to Tranquebar, and peace would prevail on all sides. All their efforts failed, and they requested Schwartz's intervention.[17] Schwartz spoke with leaders of various parties and persuaded them to return. To ensure a proper reception, he led large crowds through the gates of Tranquebar in January 1788 (AFSt/M 1C29a:3 and 5). All these diplomatic engagements demonstrate Schwartz's impact on the common people of Tanjore and Tranquebar and the trust they placed in him.

[16] Suresh Kumar, P.: *The Carnatic Wars and Tanjore Politics 1736–1764*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, 2012, p. 191: "For maintaining English soldiers for the protection of Tanjore, the rajah was required to pay two lakhs. As the demands on Tanjore increased, the king was obliged to borrow money from the rapacious renters. However, Sir Archbald Campbell, the Governor of Madras granted concessions to him allowing him to pay the subsidy of 4,60,000 rupees in nine monthly instalments as follows to face the same problem of demands. November 20,000 December 50,000 January 50,000 February 90,000 April 1,00,000 May 50,000 July 40,000 August 30,000 September 30,000."

[17] Strandberg, Elisabeth: "A Tanjore Marāṭhī letter in Moḍī script to Chr. F. Schwartz," *Acta Orientalis*, Vol. 41, 1980, pp. 17–25 and Strandberg, Elisabeth: *The Moḍī Documents from Tanjore in Danish Collections, Edited, Translated and Analysed*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1983, p. 321.

Schwartz as Kingmaker

King Tulāji did not recover well from his imprisonment (16 September 1773 to 11 April 1776), ill-treatment and looting by Wallajah and his English creditors. By the end of 1786, his health deteriorated, and he was deeply concerned about his successor. He had no son to succeed him. He was aware of various claimants within the royal court. Following established religious principles of adoption, Tulāji adopted Serfoji on 22 January 1787, a ten-year-old distant cousin, as his son and successor to the throne. On 29 January 1787, Tulāji placed Serfoji's hand in Schwartz's hand, authorising him as guardian (IOR/P/252/15, pp. 232–35). Schwartz knew that Tulāji's adoption displeased many people in the palace. To prevent civil unrest and loss of life, Schwartz recommended the appointment of Ameer Singh (c. 1738–1802),[18] a half-brother of Tulāji, as the interim ruler (IOR/H/571, p. 183). Tulāji accepted Schwartz's practical suggestion and nominated Ameer Singh as his interim successor and died on 31 January 1787.

On 26 February 1787, Governor General Charles Cornwallis recommended that the Company's Council in Madras assess the opinions of Tanjore inhabitants and then appoint Tulāji's successor. He asked Governor Campbell of Madras to travel to Tanjore and ascertain the people's opinion on Serfoji. If they welcomed him as Tulāji's legitimate successor, Campbell should install him as the king. If the people did not welcome him, he should assess Ameer Singh's suitability to succeed Tulāji (IOR/H/571, p. 190). Campbell reached Tanjore on 2 April 1787 (IOR/H/571, p. 192); Ameer Singh and Serfoji received him. The following day, Campbell learned that leading European residents and Indian merchants, "who were intimately acquainted with the laws and religious principles of the Hindoos", supported Ameer Singh as Tulāji's successor (IOR/P/252/16, pp. 31–32). On 4 April 1787, Campbell and the Committee of Inspection met the twelve pundits, known for their expertise in Sanskrit religious law, particularly adoption (Germann, 1870, p. 356). These members did not know that Ameer Singh disliked Serfoji and had bribed the twelve *pundit*s to vote for him. Schwartz translated these pundits' assessments into English (IOR/P/252/16, pp. 35–40). At that time, no one remembered Tulāji's priests, who had approved Serfoji's adoption and conducted the relevant ceremonies.

[18] Ameer Singh was born in 1738 and died on 19.04.1802. His mother's name is unknown. She was a servant at Pratāpasimha's palace and became his concubine. A Company Chronicler tried in vain to find out reliable information about Ameer Singh's real father (IOR/H/285A, pp. 626–627) and suggested that his father was Vencana, a low-ranking servant, who resembled Pratāpasimha. When Pratāpasimha came to know of his concubine's pregnancy and subsequent birth of Ameer Singh, he wanted to kill Vencana; but Vencana fled. Dropada Bai Saheb, Pratāpasimha's legal wife and queen, interceded for the safety of Ameer Singh's mother, who was allowed to stay in the palace but was no longer allowed to meet either the king or the queen. The Company Chronicler further stated that during the 1780s, Ameer Singh lived in a small house within the palace.

Schwartz did not read or understand Sanskrit; he could not verify the accuracy of the Pandits' assessments of the children being adopted. He failed to compare these opinions with the understandings, approvals and adoption rituals performed by the Tulāji court priest. Wright affirmed that "Swartz has always been regarded as a careful, honest man of God but, while the evidence is lacking to prove him otherwise, this incident does raise a niggling doubt."[19] The questions to the twelve pundits were structured to elicit answers in favour of Ameer Singh; Campbell "set aside the adoption of Serfoji." He resolved, "in the name of the English East India Company", to place Ameer Singh "on the throne of his ancestors." Immediately, "Ameer Singh expressed his high sense of English Justice" and said that selfish courtiers had persuaded Tulāji, at the last hour of his life, to adopt "this Boy [Serfoji]" (IOR/P/252/16, pp. 41–42).

Ameer Singh ascended the throne on 7 April 1787; Governor Campbell announced his enthronement in English; Schwartz read out the details of this enthronement in Tamil and Marathi; his declaration contained this message: "Let all people know that today Ameer Singh sits on the throne of his ancestors and according to the rules of this country, he is the legitimate King of Tanjore. Today he publicly promised to rule this country and his subjects justly and righteously. Therefore, you are obliged to accept him as your king and obey him. God bless the King!" (NHR, No. 36, 1790, pp. 1390–1). Then, Ameer Singh promised to govern Tanjore justly and righteously and be like a father to all inhabitants of Tanjore. He praised the "Justice, Friendship and Protection of the English nation" (IOR/P/252/16, pp. 45–46).

Thus, Ameer Singh agreed to be a puppet of the Company in Madras. To satisfy their ever-increasing expectations, to pay off the huge tributes, and to meet the devastating cost of maintaining an English army, he imposed more taxes and oppressed his people.[20] They began to hate him. Meanwhile, Ameer Singh wanted to get rid of Serfoji and mistreated him. He also disregarded the welfare of Tulāji's widows. At their request and with the Company's agreement, Schwartz relocated Serfoji and his stepmothers to Madras. There, he arranged Serfoji's safety, education and regal training.

When Serfoji's time to return to Thanjavur came, Schwartz began working at various levels. He sent his opinion on Serfoji, Ameer Singh and other claimants to the throne of Thanjavur. On 30 January 1792, Oakeley, the new governor of Madras. forwarded

[19] Wright, Don: "Swartz of Thanjavur: A missionary in politics," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1981, pp. 94–105:98.

[20] AFSt/ M 1C29b:7a: According to the Treaty of 1787, Ameer Singh "should pay 4,00,000 Pagodas to the EIC, 4,00,000 Rupees to Nawab, 52,00,000 Pagodas as pending war reparations to the same Nawab, and 5,00,000 Pagodas to the creditors. Then he must pay 7,00,000 Pagodas annually for twelve years."

Schwartz's considerations about "Tanjore Succession" to Cornwallis in Bengal (IOR/P/253/10, pp. 571–72) and awaited his response. On 11 February 1793, Cornwallis informed the Company's Council in Madras that Schwartz's opinions convinced him to declare Serfoji as the rightful heir to the throne of Tanjore. Since Ameer Singh's enthronement followed proper means, his impeachment was delicate. However, Cornwallis agreed to consult the pundits in Calcutta and Banaras anonymously about the legality of Serfoji's adoption. He urged the Company's Council in Madras "to endeavour to establish, in a clear and authentic manner, whether the opinion of any of the Tanjore Pundits was obtained by the means of bribery and corruption" (IOR/P/253/11, pp. 1186–88). Consequently, on 5 March 1793, W.C.

Jackson announced that Serfoji

> "The adopted son of the late Tulajee Maharaz, be declared presumptive Heir to His Excellency, the Present Raja, Ameer Singh, and he is hereby declared and proclaimed presumptive Heir accordingly. All Acts and Proceedings, therefore, relative to the Government and Interests of the said Province are henceforth to be made with due attention to the Rights of Serfoji as presumptive Heir aforesaid and used as shall in anywise tend to impair or encumber his Inheritance will be considered in no shape binding upon the said presumptive Heir or entitled to any countenance or respect whatever from the Honourable Company's Government. Given under the Seal of the said Company in Fort St. George the day of 8/93. By order of the Honourable President in Council. [Signed] W.C. Jackson" (IOR/P/253/11, pp. 1189–91).

Schwartz's Monuments in Thanjavur

On 11 March 1796, Serfoji returned to Tanjore; Company soldiers protected him from trouble from Ameer Singh and his loyalists. Meanwhile, Schwartz quietly prepared the way for his enthronement and died on 13 February 1798. Serfoji ascended the throne on 30 June 1798 and remained grateful to Schwartz for the rest of his life.

The monument in St. Mary's Church in Madras records Schwartz's death and his lasting impact on various groups: he spent twenty years "in the Education and religious Instruction of Children, particularly those of indigenous parents – whom he gratuitously maintained and instructed." This monument continues to state that Schwartz died "surrounded by his Infant Flock and in the presence of several of his disconsolate Brethren". Just before his death, he entreated them "to make Religion the first object of their care", and he implored "with his last breath the Divine Blessing

on their Labours." Finally, he "closed his truly Christian Career, in the 72nd year of his Age."

This monument closes with the most astonishing remark: the Company was "anxious to perpetuate the memory of such transcendent worth, and gratefully sensible of the Public Benefits which resulted from its Influence, caused this Monument to be erected, Ann[o] Dom[ini] 1807." It is not known whether the Company had erected any other magnificent monument in honour of a Christian missionary anywhere in the world.

In 1807, the Company's Court of Directors in London authorised Richard Kerr, their chaplain at Fort St. George in Madras, to erect their monument near the altar of St. Mary's Church. At the installation service, Kerr compared Schwartz's public ministry with that of the Lord Jesus Christ. Kerr stated that if the Lord Jesus Christ himself had lived in late eighteenth-century southern India, he would have

> "Publicly declared his abhorrence, as Mr. Swartz always did, of the base intrigues, the fraudulent loans, the cruel oppressions, which, during the early part of the good man's life, and for many years after, made a land of misery, desolation, and slavery, of one of the most fertile provinces of this part of India. Some of the Honourable Company's servants long since departed out of life, and others who are now virtuous and amiable members of the different communities in which they live, have blessed the day when they became acquainted with this venerable man."[21]

Serfoji too fondly remembered Schwartz's service for social peace and harmony. He erected two monuments in his honour: the monument in Christ Church in Tanjore begins with Schwartz's biographical details and describes his missionary vocation. Then it states that Schwartz "devoted from his early manhood to the office of missionary in the East, the similarity of his situation to that of the first preachers of the Gospel produced in him a peculiar resemblance to the simple sanctity of the Apostolic character." This is another testimony by a non-Christian who had benefited from Schwartz's guardianship and exemplary life of Christian faith and service in public spheres. This monument names the reasons for people's affection for him: Schwartz's "natural vivacity won the affection as his unspotted probity and purity of life alike commanded the reverence of" Christians, Muslims, and Hindus. Sovereign Hindu and Muslim princes "selected this humble Pastor as the medium of political negociation [sic! = negotiation] with the British Government". It ends by stating that Maharaja

[21] *The Life of C.F. Swartz: Missionary at Trichinopoly and Tanjore in India*, New York: American Tract Society, n.d. (1813?), p. 106.

Serfoji of Tanjore installed this marble monument as a token of his "liberal affection and esteem" for Schwartz.

Serfoji's second monument in St. Peter's Church in Thanjavur is even more intimate than the one in Christ Church. It refers to Schwartz's association with the SPCK and his death. Then it includes the following poem, the first English poem composed by an Indian prince in honour of a European. It records Serfoji's gratitude and affection to his father, namely Schwartz.

"Firm warst thou, humble and wise, Honest, pure, free from disguise: Father of orphans, the widow's support, Comfort in sorrow of every sort, To the benighted dispenser of light Doing and pointing to that which is right. Blessing to princes, to people, to me: May I, my father, be worthy of thee, Wishes and prayeth thy Sarabojee".

Conclusion

Schwartz did not keep his Lutheran Pietist convictions private; they were personal and public. His understanding that God controls the sacred and secular spheres of human life, in individuals and societies, enabled him to translate his theological convictions into ethical actions and habits among people of diverse religious and social persuasions and practices. He perceived himself and others as sinners before God, who is graciously ready to forgive humans based on the sin-atoning death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The stone monuments in St. Mary's Church in Fort St. George in Chennai, in the Christ Church and in St. Peter's Church in Thanjavur testify to his public life and service. Hugh Pearson (1776–1856), his first English biographer, expressed surprise at finding no written record that doubted Schwartz's integrity and honesty in public life.[22] The reviewers of this biography remarked that they came across nothing that fixed "the slightest or minutest blot upon his name. His virtue, so far as is recorded, was (if we may so apply the word) *without spot*, or *wrinkle*, *or any such thing*".[23] 216 years have passed since the stone monuments were erected; they silently bear witness to Schwartz, who lived a public life of Christian witness and

[22] Pearson, Hugh: *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of the Reverend Christian Frederick Swartz,* Vol. 2, London: Hatchard & Son, 1834, p. 434: "It is, however, undoubtedly true, that, whatever may have been the failings and infirmities of Swartz, they were known only to himself and to God. By his fellow-mortals they have not only never been proclaimed, but never even conjectured. He was like the patriarch of old, 'perfect and upright in his generation,' and, as far as the observation and scrutiny of man extended, exemplary and blameless. To whatever degree this peculiar excellence really belonged to him, he owed it, as he would gratefully have acknowledged, to the principles and motives of the gospel, and to that grace of God which had made him what he was, by which he ennobled the name of missionary, and displayed in these later days the virtues of the apostolic age."

[23] Smedley, Edward, James Shergold Bonne, John Henry Newman (eds.): *The British Critic and Quarterly Theological Review and Ecclesiastical Record,* Vol. 15, No. 30, April 1834, pp. 363–392:366.

service for forty-eight years and made these powerful statements on 13 February 1794: "If the Missionaries are sincere Christians, it is impossible that the inhabitants [of a country] should suffer any damage by them". He further affirmed, "before God and man, that if Christianity, in its plain and undisguised form, was properly promoted, the country would not suffer but be benefited by it." Additionally, he confirmed his joy of Christian service: "I am now at the brink of eternity; but to this moment I declare, that I do not repent of having spent forty-three years in the service of my Divine Master."[24] The speaking stones in Madras and Tanjore still bear witness to the power and public manifestation of Schwartz's Christianity for the benefit of all peoples.

[24] Schwartz, C.F.: *Defence of Missions in India by the late Venerable Mr. Swartz, published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, in their report for 1795*, London: H. Bryer, c. 1796, pp. 9, 13–14.

Abbreviations

AFSt/M	Mission Archives of the Francke Foundations in Halle (Saale), Germany
IOR	India Office Records of the British Library in London, England
Company	United Company of Merchants of England Trading to the East Indies (1708–1874), unofficially, but commonly known as the English/British East India Company, Company Raj (1757–1858), British India beginning with the Government of India Act of 1858, including the liquidation of the Company in 1784 and ending in 1947.
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, which began in 1698, exists to this day

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This is part of the researcher's thirty-two years of archival study of manuscripts in various European and Indian archives and libraries. In 1998–1999, he received a "Research Enablement Program Fellowship" from the Pew Foundation, administered through the Overseas Ministries Study Centre in New Haven, Connecticut, USA, to conduct initial research on the life and work of Christian Friedrich Schwartz in various European archives. In 2016, he received the coveted Dr Liselotte Kirchner Scholarship from the Francke Foundations in Germany for three months of residential research in Halle (Saale). Finally, in 2022, the Liverpool Hope University Research Fund sponsored a three-week stay in London to consult the British Library's archival materials related to Schwartz. He is grateful to all funders and supporters over the years.

BOOK REVIEW

Justice, Rights, Order and Disorder: Theology in Dialogue with the University

Chapters Reviewed:
1. Justice and Rights – Nicholas Wolterstorff in Dialogue with the University. Cross-Disciplinary Encounters with Theology. Edited by Terence C. Halliday and K. K. Yeo. Langham Global Library, 2024. £16.99.
2. Order and Disorder – Nigel Biggar in Dialogue with the University. Cross-Disciplinary Encounters with Theology. Edited by Terence C. Halliday and K. K. Yeo. Langham Global Library, 2026. £16.99.

Reviewed by Canon Dr Chris Sugden [1]

Keywords: Global Faculty Initiative, First and Second Order Justice, Universal Moral Order, Interdisciplinary Theology, Rights and Human Flourishing, Global Academic Representation

1. *Justice and Rights – Nicholas Wolterstorff in Dialogue with the University. Edited by Terence Halliday and K. K. Yeo, Langham, Global Library 2024 £16.99*

In the first volume of the Global Faculty Initiative of Langham Publishing, a ground-breaking series that develops a new approach to theological education by bringing it into touch with other disciplines and fields of study and action, Nicholas Wolterstorff discusses Justice and Rights with comments and engagement from a wide range of scholars.

His thesis is that justice has two possible meanings. First order justice is in just human relationships characterised by giving people the dignity and honour that is their right. Second order justice is to carry out judgement due when people do not act in accord with what acting justly requires. They then face justice.

He argues that justice and love are not antithetical, but that love incorporates acting justly. Other scholars argue that such a view of first order justice is subjective, that

[1] Canon Dr Chris Sugden is head of the Ph.D. programme at OCRPL, member of the OCRPL Academic Council, and a member of the JRPL Editorial Board.

rights are not grounded in the subjective will and desire of the isolated individual and that human relationships are not defined by people's rights but by love.

Wolterstorff's discussion is very useful when he engages with the contemporary view that people should be able to do what they want, in accord with whatever identity they choose and that no one should stop them. This is rooted, as Joan Lockwood O'Donvoan writes in 'the socially atomistic and disintegrative philosophy of possessive individualism'.

Wolterstorff responds his interlocutors by noting that the claiming rights without regard to the rights of others is an abuse of rights talk. Rights are not only to be claimed, they are to be acknowledged in others.

The applications developed from Wolterstorff's thesis are mainly by academics to their university environment. While this is fair enough in encouraging Christian voices on topics of concern to the academy, should such a volume not also include engagement from those who are engaged in administering and reflecting on second order justice in the legal system, in politics, in addressing injustice by their involvement in relief and development or working with poor people and oppressed minorities?

Some responders use Wolterstorff's first order/ second order distinction to illuminate and engage with issues of justice and rights in their fields of experience and expertise. The most useful and interesting developments of the initial thesis are on Economic Justice and the Politics of Redistribution, the Quest to reduce the Risk of Disasters, Justice for Colombia's displaced persons, Restorative Justice, Family Law and Climate Change Justice.

Less helpful are the responses, some less than half a page, that just raise questions and practical implications which they do not explore further. This raises the possibility that the issue of the precise definition or vocabulary used is not as significant as the process of taking a definition, which may be disputed, but nevertheless testing it by its usefulness in illuminating a field of study and action.

Perhaps further volumes in the series might focus more on the responses that apply and test the thesis offered.

2. *Order and Disorder Nigel Biggar in Dialogue with the University. Cross-Disciplinary Encounters with Theology Edited by Terence C Halliday and K. K. Yeo. Langham Global Library 2026 £16.99*

This volume in the Global Faculty Initiative of Langham Publishing, consists of 16 pages from Lord Biggar, former Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at Oxford in which he argues that the doctrine of God and creation includes the existence of an objective and universal moral order of principles that are necessary to secure what is needed for human flourishing, namely the goods of truth, friendship with God, personal integrity, beauty and creativity which themselves need no further justification.

A series of responses and comments follow, some no longer than half a page in length, from scholars around the world in a variety of disciplines. The point is to demonstrate what theology can offer to a wide range of academic disciplines, and in turn what those disciplines can offer to enable theology to make a relevant contribution.

The volume ends with an 11 page response from Dr Biggar to issues raised in the responses.

Some parts of the book are hard going as some responses, many under a page in length, are very esoteric and expressed in the language and terms of the discipline from which they are written. These make it difficult for a general reader to relate them to the main argument of the book. It would therefore help, in a second edition or further collections in this series, if every response, as some do, could include a 'so what' implication of their contribution illustrated with a practical example of what their response adds to the understanding of the central theme of the book.

To give one example. A half-page response critiques Lord Biggar's presentation as 'androcentricc' and concludes "What might need to be said about the role of the non-human (majority) of the created order, including animals and the eco-system, in a theology of the created order?"

A 'so what' would be a further exposition of what such a role in a theology of the created order would contribute to the case being made about the objective nature of a moral order of accountability. The responder may want to elaborate on the theme of stewardship in which man and woman, as images of God, in other words the representatives of God on earth in the same way that ancient eastern kings placed their images in regions over which they had control, have responsibility for the care of the created order which is not just formless clay, but itself has a role in God's plan.

What does this mean that role is to be, and how are human beings to relate to it? Lord Biggar engages with the non-human world in addressing 'radical ontological egalitarianism' on page 11 and how 'the created world reflects the coherence, the rationality, the beauty, the order of the Creator". Lord Biggar is only androcentric to the degree that the biblical narrative is androcentric and clearly has a place for the createdness of the non-human world in his theology. What more would the responder like to be said, and could it please be said rather than left hanging?

Another responder cites music that 'connects us freely and creatively with the Logos of the universe'. An interesting 'so what' would be to expand on the fact that we use music significantly in our worship of God through hymns and songs, most clearly in the Bible in the Psalms. Readers could be encouraged to reflect when they sing "Psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs' that they (we) are joining in with the harmony and songs of creation.

There are such responses that build on Dr Biggar's opening essay and develop the theme of a given moral order as it applies, for example, to public health, market economics, and to its relation to positive law.

A lot of work has gone into the collection. Dr Biggar's article was sent, probably in 2022 to 150 Christian academics for their comments and responses and the volume has been published in 2026. His response both addresses some of the issues his respondents raise but also builds points they raise into his understanding.

For example, he exposes the self- contradiction of much post-modern thought which insists both on a particular view of the world and at the same time insists that there are no incontrovertible truths. He also, based on actual experience, concedes that a Christian concern for forgiveness and reconciliation as an expression of God's moral order can only, in some circumstances go so far, as when a Lutheran deacon who had been twice imprisoned by the communist authorities in Eastern Germany for her dissident activity found herself living in the same street as the person who had informed on her. 'Co-existence' and 'accommodation' were thought to be more appropriate terms in those circumstances.

Neither volume, regrettably has a contribution from those who are living and teaching in Africa or South Asia. This is sad when the prime claim of Dr Biggar is that the moral order of creation is universal and that Professor Wolterstorff is seeking a universal understanding of justice and rights.

They both read as transcribed and helpful extended seminars with a scholar following their opening presentation. It is therefore easier to digest them by drawing on individual responses and referring back to the main essay rather than straight through.

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BOOK REVIEW

Two Histories of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Reviewed by Monsignor Michael Nazir-Ali [1]

Keywords: Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Good Disagreement, Holy Land Christians, Oriental Jewry, Two-State Solution, Interreligious Dialogue

It is very gratifying that men of the stature of Colin Chapman and James Patrick have undertaken this exercise in 'good disagreement'. In matters such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is manifest that all the truth is not on one side or the other and so it becomes important for the reader to discern what is true in each account. This is quite different, of course, from central doctrinal and moral questions where 'good disagreement' in the one fellowship is not possible.

Chapman and Patrick have set out their respective positions on opposite pages. This makes for ease in comparison. It soon becomes obvious that each side has been wronged and the wrongs need to be put right. John Stott used to say that there is no theology of the land in the New Testament. Prophecies of a 'return to the land' in the biblical books cannot simply be applied today when both the Jewish and Arab populations have such diverse origins. What can be said is that the Jews have the right to enter and settle in the land with which they have such rich historic, cultural and religious associations. This cannot be, however, as the Balfour Declaration recognised, to the detriment of the non-Jewish communities also settled in the land. History and theology, conquest and settlement, cannot easily be prised apart.

Christians in the land, whether Palestinian, Armenian or Messianic should be given much more attention than they usually are. Their contribution to the revival of the Arabic language, nationalism and education is out of all proportion to their numbers

[1] Monsignor Michael Nazir-Ali is a Pakistani-born British Catholic priest and former Anglican bishop. He served as Bishop of Rochester from 1994 to 2009 and, before that, as Bishop of Raiwind in Pakistan. He is currently the director of the Oxford Centre for Training, Research, Advocacy and Dialogue.

(even if these were much larger in the land than they are now). In the Holy Land they have as much stake as anyone else.

In a similar way, Oriental Jews, both Mizrahi and Sephardi, from Yemen, Iraq, Iran, India, Egypt, Morocco, and Ethiopia, who form the majority of the Israeli population, have sometimes fled centuries of persecution and present-day danger to be in Israel. Many of them have nowhere else to go. They too need much more attention than Jewry of European background, who are often on the airwaves.

The question as to whether lands once conquered by Muslims can ever pass to non-Muslim control is an urgent one to address in Interreligious and intercultural dialogue. The future of peaceful co-existence in India, the Iberian Peninsula, the Balkans etc depends on such dialogue. In this respect the Holy Land is no different from other parts of the world, even if there are special features to the attachment of Muslims to their holy sites. Christians also have such attachments and the Jews have them most of all.

The arguments on each side reveal opportunities that have been missed. There must be a realistic commitment to a two-state solution, with each side being prepared to sacrifice some prized beliefs.

There were, of course, many Catholic reform minded people like Erasmus, John Fisher, Thomas More and Reginald Pole who wanted the Scriptures to be read in their original language and made available in the vernacular, albeit with the consent of the Church. It is well known that bishops and other ecclesiastical authorities often protected Jews from extremist threats. Protestants were not alone in such attitudes. At the same time, neither Catholics nor Protestants can be excused from the taint of anti-semitism.

I wonder whether the two authors would be prepared to go a step further and, instead of just setting out their positions, they would attempt a synthesis so that a single piece of writing brings together the diverse experiences and situation of the peoples in the Holy Land, with, perhaps, a joint attempt at proposing a solution to this mother of problems. That would, indeed, be a signal contribution from our distinguished authors!

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BOOK REVIEW

John, Aruthuckal Varughese. 2025. Indian Secularism and Religious Freedom: Mapping the Cross-Pressures.

Oxford University Press. eBook, https://doi.org/10.1093/9780198935155.001.0001.
(INR 995 Book, eBook from $ 71.99 USD/ INR 1,200)

Reviewed by Rev Dr Prasad D.R J. Phillips [1]

Keywords: Indian Secularism, Religious Freedom, Conversion in India, Christian Existentialism, Constitutional Rights and Duties

In this Oxford University Press publication, contemporary Indian Christian philosopher A.V. John applies his expertise in existential philosophy and Kierkegaard studies, along with two decades as a theological educator in India, to examine Indian secularism. This complex concept has significantly reshaped India's religious and socio-political thought and practice since Independence. As John notes in the Introduction, 'This book neither examines secularism as an ideology nor tests secularisation theory's prediction that religious belief will inevitably die out. Instead, it attempts to assess honestly secularism's effects in India, focusing on cultural shifts and tensions caused by introducing its ideological foundations—individual autonomy and personal authenticity—into an ancient society.'

This book comprises six chapters, in addition to an introduction and a conclusion. Most chapters originated as conference papers or previously published works by the author. Yet, he has made a serious attempt to integrate them cohesively into the central argument of Indian secularism and religious freedom.

The principle thesis posits that secularism is a 'prodigal child' of Christianity now fostered, raised, and reshaped within the Indian context. The first chapter interrogates: "Is there an Indian secularism?" It argues that, if secularism is privileged

[1] Rev Dr Prasad D.R J. Phillips, Head of Programmes and Chair of the Executive Council of the Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life.

by the Indian Constitution, it seems to situate itself within Indian cultural and religious traditions. This chapter first unpacks the ontology of secularism, tracing its Christian roots through Charles Taylor's scholarship and briefly tracing secularism in Indian history. It references emperors Ashoka and Akbar, who, despite wielding significant power, emphasised liberty and tolerance in their respective eras.

Building on this, the second chapter, "Secularism and its cross-pressures", further examines the tension between community duties and individual rights. This chapter analyses how Western and Eastern understandings of secularism differ in their emphasis on individual autonomy (rights) versus communitarian obligation (duties/dharma), creating cross-pressures for Indian Christians and minorities caught between Indian realities and global secular paradigms. Nevertheless, this chapter fails to note that, alongside fundamental rights (1950), the 42nd Amendment (1976) added fundamental duties as obligations to the nation and fellow citizens. To Indianise secularism, the perception is that the Western notion of secularism is seen as diminishing or polluting sacredness; positioning constitutional fundamental rights above traditional Indian religious principles and practices is often presented by nationalists. This tension is intensified by secularist and religious fundamentalist groups, who interpret religious freedom in very different ways.

The third chapter, "Anthropological Assumptions, Human Rights, and the Freedom of Religion Bills", analyses debates generated by these bills and compares them with the anthropological assumptions of secularism and Hinduism. The chapter seems to advocate that the proponents of secularism emphasise freedom and individual choice, while critics, particularly those concerned with conversion from Hinduism, view these developments as coercive and socially disruptive. In short, the argument is that freedom given to individuals to choose their religion disrupts the social and religious harmony of a Hindu nation, and thus makes any religious conversion problematic.

Chapter four, "Portraits of Religious Conversions", examines conversion and analyses various forms of interreligious strife. These conflicts are attributed to cross-pressures arising from India's unique condition of secularity, as interpreted by the Hindu majority in opposition to Christians and the concept of secularism. Resistance to conversion is rooted in concerns among orthodox Hindus regarding cultural betrayal and the disruption of a sacred social order.

The fifth chapter is "Religious freedom, Truth-Predicates and the Ghent School". According to the Ghent School, religious freedom in the Indian Constitution rests on individual equality, whereas the Hindu perspective emphasises the equality of religious beliefs. John challenges this interpretation, arguing that it is a misconception.

Drawing on the Sivapurana (Shivaism), John argues that Hinduism has a framework of truth-predicates underpinning its religious beliefs, contrary to the Ghent School's assertion. Consequently, for him, religious freedom in India allows individuals to choose their beliefs and practices from among diverse Hindu traditions, with Christianity as an additional, non-coercive option.

In chapter six, the argument looks at a way forward for addressing these cross-pressures, especially for Dalit communities and many other converts to Christianity, who see their life in Christianity as a break from the past, erasing culturally and religiously oppressed memories as a subversive assertiveness. Other Christian converts, meanwhile, have chosen a hybridised or contextualised Christianity that is distinctly Indian and part of the diverse and complex Indian religious and cultural landscape.

Interestingly, John situates religious conversion in India within the framework of the Indian Constitution, which supports diversity and a pluralistic religious environment rather than enforcing a uniform code; however, he does not address this issue in this book. The current government's efforts to implement a unified civil code through constitutional amendments risk marginalising minority groups and diminishing diversity. While John analyses the topic from both constitutional (Ambedkar) and fundamentalist Hindu perspectives, this review notes the absence of an in-depth Gandhian or even Nehruvian perspective on secularism alongside Ambedkar and the founders of modern India, who prioritised religious equality, democracy and coexistence. Indian secularism does not separate state and religion but is protected by a constitutional framework that recognises all religions as equal and upholds freedom of conscience and choice without discrimination. So, the big question remains unanswered: "Is India secular or Hindu?"

A short note on style and format: this book occasionally suffers from repetitive arguments and phrasing in some chapters, which can reduce clarity and may require multiple readings.

In conclusion, this book is a welcome contribution to scholarship on Indian secularism. Its availability in India will make it accessible for personal collections. The text is a valuable resource for those interested in the unique characteristics of Indian secularism, particularly in a context where religious faith is perceived to be declining. However, this book reminds us that, as much as religion has scope, it can be used by society to move to extremes – fanatical or fundamentalist.

I recommend this book for students, universities, and theological institutions, and for their libraries, because of its comprehensive arguments, extensive bibliography, and in-depth analysis relevant to both political and religious studies on secularism.

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