

He concluded a sinless human life, for He had to be a spotless Lamb of God (1 Pet 1:19) to make atonement for sinners (2 Cor 5:21). Furthermore, He died as a human, for God cannot die because He is immortal (1 Tim 6:16). Treat claims Rev 4-5 as a "visual" of his thesis (p. 119). But the "slain Lamb on the throne" is on the throne of heaven, not on the cross (Rev 5:1-13). Christ was not "anointed" as King at His baptism as Treat claims (p. 250), but on heaven's throne after His ascension. "God says to Christ: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. . . .Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You" (Heb 1:8-9).

This indicates that the exaltation in heaven followed the humiliation of the cross. (Contra Treat: pp. 152, 159) Scripture clearly supports that Christ's exaltation follows humiliation. For Christ descended from His position as God and humbled Himself "even [to] the death of the cross" (Phil 2:5-8). "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:9-11).

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Christians in South Indian Villages, 1959-2009: Decline and Revival in Telangana, by John B. Carman and Chilkuri Vasantha Rao. Studies in the History of Christian Missions. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. xxiv + 242 pp. ISBN 978-0-8028-7163-3. Softcover, US\$35.00

In 1959, P.Y. Luke and John Carman made a study on nine Dalit village congregations in the Jangarai Section of the Wadiaram pastorate under the Medak Diocese (Hyderabad) of the Church of South India (CSI) resulting in the publication of the book *Village Christians and Hindu Culture: Study of a Rural Church in Andhra Pradesh, South India* (London: Lutterworth, 1968). In *Christians in South Indian Villages*, John Carman and Vasantha Rao, who worked in the region for several years, attempt to re-study those congregations after a lapse of fifty years to determine their progress. Eight seminary students assisted them in collecting data. The authors also personally visited several congregations. The project took six years to complete.

In the beginning the authors present a brief review of the 1959 study, their own research methodology, and primary discoveries. The history of

the state of Telangana where the congregations are located is also discussed. Telangana was once a part of the princely state of Hyderabad until its unification with the state of Andhra Pradesh. On February 14, 2014, after years of protests, Telangana was made a separate Indian state for the Telugu-speaking people. The authors then analyze the implications of the socio-political state for Dalit Christians. This is followed by a succinct history of Christianity in India in relation to the Christian congregations in the state and particularly Medak Diocese.

At the completion of their study, John Carman and Vasantha Rao made several discoveries, some of which were uplifting while others evidently discouraging. In 1959, the nine congregations studied had regular church services. Six of them had an evangelist in residence while the other three were regularly visited by an evangelist and presbyter. Fifty years later, two congregations no longer exist with its members joining other churches; one continues to exist through a few families; three are maintaining some sort of congregational life; one continues to exist but has for decades ceased to conduct its regular services; only one congregation (the largest) has a resident pastor; and another has had an evangelist for most of the time up until the last ten years. All these congregations experienced a significant decrease in membership. The authors provide several factors for the decline in the congregations: namely, lack of pastoral care and nurture, large number of nominal Hindu wives joining the churches, Christian women marrying to Hindu men, loss of members to independent churches, and large numbers of Dalit Christians registering themselves as Hindus in the decennial national census in order to receive state benefits.

The authors did not anticipate the rise of several independent congregations (twenty-five in number) in the Wadiaram pastorate, all of which came into existence only in the last thirty years. They include the Pentecostals, the Baptists, and other evangelical Protestants. While almost all members of the CSI congregations were of low-caste (Malas and Madigas), most of the members in independent churches were from different high-castes, Mudhiraj, the landholding caste being the majority. Many of them claimed to be converts from Hinduism as a result of miraculously healings. Having interviewed several of them, the authors found out that the members??? did not see caste differences causing a problem of unity in the church. They lament that while the independent churches continue to grow the CSI congregations are stagnant. According to the authors, if this trend persists, the independent churches will eclipse the CSI churches. They also discovered three congregations with characteristics of independent churches but belonging to the Church of South India. The members of these congregations are first-generation converts who became Christians because they believed they had been healed from illness or black magic.

Readers, especially novices to Indian church history, will be rather disturbed to read through the book and realize that many of the Christians under discussion live dual lives—as a Christian and as a Hindu—observing both Christian and Hindu practices. Because they live among the majority (Hindus), they often participate in the rites and festivals in order to be accepted in the larger community and for the preservation of communal harmony. They have also adapted many of the Hindu rituals, festivals, and practices creating syncretism with Christianity. Some of these adaptations include the Jathara Festival consisting of pilgrimages, a holy bath in the Godavari River, breaking of coconuts, and the lighting of a large cross; traditional dances and drama; and the Christian home festival, an adaptation of the Hindu Dipavali or Diwali, the festival of lights. It is pointed out that “the Medak Diocese has gone further than many Protestant churches in India in recognizing the necessity of adaptation and in deliberately trying to plan it” (p. 153).

On the other hand, the authors express their delight in learning that the members in the more active older CSI congregations are knowledgeable and can readily articulate their Christian beliefs although they caution that “we do not know whether they are a representative sample of their congregation” (p. 169). The issue of conversion and Christian religious identity are also highlighted. According to the Indian government, one can register only as a Hindu in the Scheduled Caste category in order to receive benefits. This has compelled many Dalit Christians especially among the CSI congregations to register themselves as Hindus although they continue to consider themselves Christians resulting in a decrease in Christian population in the country’s demographics. Several appeals have been made to the Indian government to amend this policy and allow Christians to register as Scheduled Castes. The response of the government is being closely watched and anxiously anticipated.

As stated earlier, this study is limited to nine congregations in the Janagarai Section of Wadiaram pastorate under the Medak Diocese. As of now, the Diocese consists of more than 70 pastorates with over 1,100 congregations. The Wadiaram pastorate has 22 congregations (30 in 1959). Because of the narrowness of the research, it is difficult to conclude that its findings are representative of the entire Medak Diocese or Telangana state. The authors’ persistent acknowledgement of this limitation and insistence on a tentative rather than a decisive conclusion could be seen as a weakness. One would certainly be more inclined to a study that is both conclusive and representative of a larger area. However, the nature of the study provides a close investigation of these selected congregations, which in turn helps the reader better understand these congregations in a much more intimate way than a broader study can. The authors have not

only humbly recognized the limitation but also recommend future studies in this direction.

I highly recommend *Christians in South Indian Villages* to every reader interested in learning more about Indian Christian history. The book will elucidate the life, rituals, beliefs, and challenges of Christians in South Indian villages particularly in the Wadiaram pastorate in the Telangana state. The quality of the publication's content makes it worth the purchase price.

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Grassroots Asian Theology: Thinking the Faith from the Ground Up, by Simon Chan. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014. 216 pp. ISBN 978-0-8308-9. Softcover, US\$22.00.

Simon Chan (Ph.D., Cambridge) is an earnest Lau Professor of Systematic Theology at Trinity Theological College in Singapore. He is the author of *Spiritual Theology*, *Liturgical Theology*, and *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition*. He is also the associate editor of the *Global Dictionary of Theology*.

As the title indicates, this book is focused on Asian grassroots Christianity. The author begins the preface of this book with the following statement: "Much of what the West knows as Asian theology consists largely of elitist accounts of what Asian theologians are saying, and elitist theologians seldom take grassroots Christianity seriously. Yet it is at the grassroots level that we encounter a vibrant, albeit implicit, theology" (p. 7). Then, at the end of the preface, he clarifies that his work "is not a systematic theology" and his goal is "to force a rethink on the way Asian theology is currently undertaken and in so doing show the distinctive contributions of Asian grassroots Christianity to the wider church's theological endeavors" (p. 8).

This book consists of six chapters. In the first chapter, the author discusses several methodological questions. First of all, he stresses the role of tradition in the formation of theology. He observes that "church doctrines are not the result of Scripture alone" (p. 12). For him, Scripture is the "given script for the drama whose director is the Holy Spirit" (p. 13). This dramatic script, he says, is not only to be translated but also to be interpreted in the local context. For this reason, secondly, he emphasizes that