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*Christian Inculturation in India,*

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Anyone who has set foot in India recognises that here Christianity finds itself as not only a minority religion, but one located among a wide variety of vibrant religious cultures with living cult and ancient scriptures. It might be a tiny statue of Ganesh on the bus driver's dashboard, or a colourful temple, or the initially incongruous sight of a cow with decorated horns calmly walking along a footpath. To Christians long familiar with their religion being either identical with culture (as in Europe) or capable of being identified with 'the advent of civilisation' (as in Africa), India was a problem. For those who did not ignore the problem (and the Neo-gothic churches that can be seen in India show that for many it was not a problem), the answer lay in an awareness of the need for Christians to forget European trappings and problems, and become absorbed into local cultures of India. Here we find the twin themes of inculturation and ecumenism, and the abiding fear – parallel with the fear with which many Protestant Christians viewed the inculturation of Christianity within the Graeco-Roman world – that taking on local colour was equivalent to 'syncretism' and this was seen as equivalent to traducing the gospel.

This book is a survey of the history of these questions in India from the perspective of how that need for inculturation has expressed itself in liturgy. It looks at the roots of the theology of inculturation in India in the 19th century, how this theme becomes a central focus in the theologies of the Anglican

Church, the Catholic Church, and the agenda of missionary organisations and the WCC. If today one cannot talk about Christianity (or theology) apart from culture, this realisation was neither obvious nor inevitable, especially in the case of Christianity in India, but the work of creative and courageous leaders over the past century and a half.

The work also examines the various strands in the contemporary debate on Christianity and culture, and the various approaches to the question of inculturation, across the world today. With a more Indian focus it examines the question of Christianity and the *dalits* (the untouchables) and notes how for many theologians and liturgists in India today, one cannot inculturate without at the same time pursuing an agenda of social justice. The book is a good introduction for those seeking to know what is happening in Indian Christianity today and to anyone who is concerned with the need for an inculturated liturgy anywhere.

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