The Devastating Role of Cultural Bigotry in Our Outreach to Hindus

by D.D. Pani

Dr. D. D. Pani is a textbook author and has published a large number of international journal articles. Over the last three decades, Dr. Pani has spent considerable time in India. Though he and his wife are currently residents of Pennsylvania, he continues to travel extensively in the Indian subcontinent.

The Current Status of the Bigotry Stumbling Block in India

During the age of Western exploration and expansion that began in the mid-15th century, Europeans believed that there was nothing they could learn from *non-Europeans.[1]* In short, they suffered from a "superiority complex," believing in the supremacy of *European culture* and of *the Western form of Christianity* (see [2] for a more in depth treatment). As they advanced, the imperialist forces of Europe simply rejected most of the foreign ideas—whether philosophical, ethical, religious,[1] sociological and, in some cases, even scientific—that they encountered along the way. For they had concluded that if Western Christian culture is superior (and universal), then all "pagan" cultures are not simply *inferior,* but *evil.*

Regrettably, for over 500 years now the Western Christian view that Hindu culture is both inferior and evil has helped to minimize the progress of the gospel within the Hindu world. In India today, such attitudes—held by large numbers of Western missionaries—strongly permeate the baptized Indian Church. Offspring of the missionary movement in India, the now highly westernized Indian Church (westernized both in the various religious forms it follows and the Euro-American Christian sub-culture it seeks to emulate) tends to feed and reinforce a fundamental bias against Hindu culture.

Tragically, many of today's reputed Christian spokesmen for India, both Indian and Western, are still unable to distinguish Hindu *culture* from the Hindu *religion.* And when the Western missionary community and the Indian Church heed these sincere (but misguided) spokesmen, they not only perpetuate the cycle, but reinforce each other's attitudes. The newly arrived Western missionary is soon taking his cues from the prejudiced Indian Church while the Indian Church is further influenced by the negatively pre-conditioned Western missionary. And *Hindu culture* continues to be viewed as evil because *the Hindu religion* cannot bring salvation.

As a result of this bigotry, the Western missionary usually only feels comfortable focusing on the Indian Church; he is practically incapable of engaging the Hindu world. Thus (by one estimate), the percentage of Western

missionaries engaging Hindus directly today rounds off to zero, with 96% focusing on the baptized Indian Church and 4% focusing on the non-Hindu tribals. As for the highly westernized Indian Church (which has been trained by the West to abhor Hindu culture), it has become so isolated from mainstream Hindu culture that it is now fairly ignorant of the Hindu religion. Moreover, as the Indian Church increasingly adopts the cultural trappings of the West (of the various "sub" [i.e., "Christian"] and also of some of the various "primary" [i.e., "secular"] Western cultures), the chasm between Indian Christians and Hindus only widens.

Unfortunately, many Western missionaries in India minister only to westernized Indian Christians in the idealistic belief (hope) that their efforts will "eventually" result in Hindus being reached, a pursuit that has borne minimal fruit. Instead, their presence and ministry simply make the Indian Christian even more Western and thus generally less capable of reaching the Hindu. Thankfully, there are exciting exceptions.

Perhaps even more disconcerting, the perceptive Hindu is not blind to the combined prejudice of the Western missionary and the Indian Church toward him. Instead he is repulsed by it.[3] While the Hindu intelligentsia is still generally tolerant, what are they to conclude from the failure of Western Christians or the Indian Church to initiate much credible dialogue in their direction? True, some relatively small effort is being directed toward the lowest elements of Hindu culture, with a much larger effort among non-Hindu tribals. Despite very large numbers of non-baptized Hindu Christ followers living among Hindus in parts of India,[4] throughout most of India the Hindu mainstream and India's intelligentsia have been largely ignored. *Those who should be the light of Christ to the perceptive Hindu are not engaging him!* Instead, assuming the above statistics to be at least representative, the mainstream Hindu has been abandoned—and alas he knows it.[3]

*B*ecause of bigotry, the Western missionary is not engaging the Hindu, nor are his baptized Indian disciples able to do so.

Thus, in India today, Western bigotry represents a significant hindrance to the advance of the gospel. Because of bigotry, the Western missionary is not engaging the Hindu, nor are his baptized Indian disciples able to do so. And when a potential Hindu seeker finds himself despised and unengaged (abandoned), his willingness to consider Christ is greatly undermined.

Proposed Solutions to the Problem of Cultural Bigotry

"Are you the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?" John the Baptist asked Jesus through one of his messengers.[5] In response, after performing several miracles in front of John's disciples, Christ sent this sharp public rebuke back to John: "Blessed is he w*ho keeps from stumbling over Me.*"[6] More than fifteen years later we see another giant in conflict with his spiritual counterpart to the Jews. Paul publicly blasts Peter, asking: *"If you being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how do you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"*[7]

If the greatest man born of woman and the apostle to whom Jesus had entrusted the keys of the kingdom both had trouble understanding God's transitions, certainly the same must be common to all born of the Spirit. This is especially likely in ministries involving cross-cultural transitions. Should we expect it to be any different for those in the Western Missionary Movement (WMM) who have gone before us?

Before considering possible solutions to the *Problem of Cultural Bigotry,* we should make one thing clear. That is, despite their failings, the efforts of most of the Westerners who came to serve Christ in India were inimitable, and their general sincerity beyond question. They were simply victims of the problem of Western cultural bigotry, themselves forced to carry with them the Western cultural bag-

gage (and Western Christian sub-cultural baggage) they had inherited. Had they foreseen the results of their attitudes and actions, most would have been appalled and taken immediate steps to change. Rather than judge the great people who have gone before, we must learn from Hindu reactions to their passionate, but culturally flawed attitudes and actions. Then, for a better future, we must make changes appropriate to the realities of Hindu culture.

But how do we become preconditioned to such an extent that, even with the Holy Spirit in us, we (like John the Baptist and Peter) continue to hold on tightly to outdated attitudes, actions, strategies, methodologies, traditions, etc.—especially when God's new prophets of transition are revealing these things to be outdated or incorrect? Since our knowledge will always be incomplete,[8] why are we unwilling to incorporate new data when it comes our way? And how can we train others (and ourselves) to overcome these tendencies so that 1) *we don't become an additional source of negative preconditioning,* and so that 2) *the existing biases of others following us can be eliminated?* These are major questions that must be answered if we are going to be able to effectively seek and save the lost of India.

A first step toward answering these questions is to look very briefly at the way Christ "trained bigotry *out* of His disciples" while operating in their own Jewish culture. Next, we will look at several realities of Hindu culture that must be properly understood before we can properly accept and disciple the new Hindu believer in Christ. Finally, we will delineate a number of bold directives to help the West overcome their part in the problem of cultural bigotry in India.

How Christ "Trained Bigotry Out of His Disciples"
The reader is referred to the discussion in [2] on solutions to the Problem
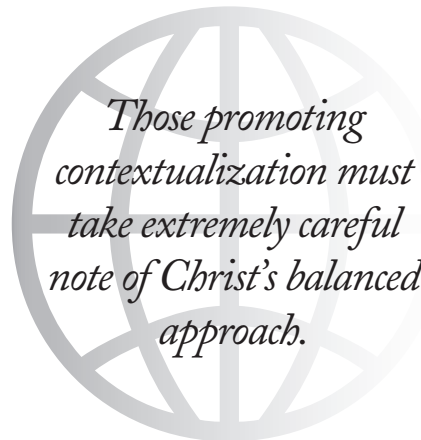
of Superiority of Culture. In this reference it is explained why it was so essential for Christ to train bigotry *out* of the Twelve. By using a harmony of the Gospels one can readily obtain Christ's strategy for accomplishing this task.

The goal of Christ's training was not only to prepare the Apostles to reach the Gentile, the Samaritan, the unclean, the outcaste and the lowly. He also needed to ensure that his reprogramming efforts did not result in a backlash of bias toward their own "primary" culture (in their case Jewish). This required an extraordinarily delicate and balanced approach. One of my main concerns for some who are currently promoting the contextualization (non–extraction) approach in India today is the creation of bias against all that is Western.

As we can see from the adjustments Paul instituted as he worked to establish a Gentile church in the Roman world, God clearly did not want the Church at large to adopt the many trappings of Jewish culture. Yet, in His training of the Twelve, Christ conformed whenever He could to the neutral and righteous elements of the Jewish culture of His time. As He taught during His Galilean Synagogue ministry, Christ followed the common pattern of worship. He attended many of the feasts in Jerusalem and kept social obligations. And as He taught the masses, He used cultural phrases such as "let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer."[9] In keeping with his cultural responsibilities as the oldest son, he made adequate arrangements for the care of His mother after His departure. Moreover, He conformed to the current movement of God in His land at the time, to the extent of submitting to John's baptism. Upon healing a leper, He commanded him to go to the priest to make an offering for cleansing in accordance with the Old Testament Law. Furthermore, He never spoke against Roman rule nor encouraged rebellion, but told the people to render to Caesar what belonged to Caesar. Finally, He humbly submitted Himself to the politically motivated sentencing of

the Sanhedrin. Many other examples could be given.

Rather than suggesting that Christ accommodated the evil of the Jewish culture, these examples show that His approach to rooting out the Apostles' bigotry did not include turning them against their own heritage. To turn them against their own partially flawed culture would have only served to refocus their prejudice. Again, those promoting contextualization must take extremely careful note of Christ's balanced approach. It is crucial to observe that, in His great Sermon on the Mount, Christ

Those promoting contextualization must take extremely careful note of Christ's balanced approach.

upheld—and even extended—the rigor of the Moses' teachings. He was not in any way opposed to these traditions, even though in other places we often do see Him (apparently) challenging them. For the sake of His followers, Christ challenged people who rigidly conformed to the "letter" of these traditions without understanding the "spirit" or intent behind them. In so doing, He was challenging the blind application of these traditions when this kept people from applying higher spiritual principles (such as compassion). And he was condemning "righteous" acts performed to justify selfish and evil deeds.

By not keeping the religious fasts, Sabbath rests, hand washings, etc., Christ created opportunities to reveal deeper truths and to expose hypocrisy. In other words, His non-conformance to these various traditions was *functional* and *not for the sake of stirring rebellion*. He was not, as many have suggested,[10] (in some cases to justify their own excesses) a human

rights revolutionary or a trouble-maker. He lived in submission to oppression and taught His followers to do the same.[11] As later revelations in the New Testament clearly show, Christ did not train His disciples to rebel against either Jewish culture or Jewish religious tradition. At the time of the leadership of James (the brother of Jesus) we find the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem maintaining most of their Jewish cultural and religious heritage.

Unconditional Inclusiveness in Associations

One way in which Christ strongly broke with the culture of Israel in His time was in the area of associations. He physically touched lepers and associated closely with the unclean. He was a friend to outcastes and liked to drink and fellowship with known sinners. He even included subversive elements in His famous Twelve. He had dealings with Samaritans and Gentiles. He took time to praise one Gentile in public and had his disciples distribute food to and collect crumbs at the feet of a crowd of some 4000 men—plus women and children—who were mostly Greek Gentiles. He took time to enjoy the young and spend time with the lowly. Though revered by his own followers as a Rabbi, He even interacted with questionable members of the opposite sex in public!

Such associations, while shocking to the Jewish culture of Christ's time, were consistent with Christ's concepts of compassion, love and the worth of the individual. The balanced and consistent manner in which He modeled this inclusion principle deeply affected His disciples—and did the most to cleanse bigotry from their hearts.

Many other almost equally important principles could be shared. For example, when involved in conflict, Christ never quarreled with His opponents (in accordance with the prophecy of Isaiah[12]). Christ often gave His opponents a second chance. He admonished Jews not to put any faith or confidence in their Jewish heritage. And He taught His followers not to judge others, but to forgive

*E*ach Hindu has a unique set of social and religious obligations. Quite unlike the West, Indian society distinguishes clearly between the two.

the sins of all. Christ skillfully wove these principles (and many others) into the training of His men to help them overcome prejudice.

It is left to the reader to ponder two additional events. Consider, first, the Samaritan woman at the well. What overall impact did Christ's well-known interaction with her have upon His disciples? Or consider His encounter with the main Gerasene demoniac. Who was he racially and socially? How much time did Christ invest in delivering him? What other ministry did Christ leave behind when He boarded a boat to go to this man's rescue? How did this man later impact the Greek area of Decapolis? And what else did the Twelve learn about tolerance from this encounter and during their later trip to the Decapolis?

Space does not permit us to explore Christ's strategy in teaching any of the above principles. Instead, the purpose of this brief introduction to Christ's approach is to point out the vast store of "bigotry reduction data" hidden within many of the events of Christ's life. From the study of this data one can uncover Christ's principles for removing prejudice. Using these principles, the Master worked to remove the negative preconditioning of His disciples in two areas: 1) their belief in the absolute superiority of their own culture relative to all Gentile cultures, and 2) their inhibitions over forging associations with all types of people. No longer hamstrung by their previous negative preconditioning, the Twelve could effectively build relationships with and reach not only the rich, the religious upper class, and the socially acceptable, but also the lowly, the outcaste, the unclean, the Samaritan and the Gentile. As a result of His training, all classes of people of all cultures could and would be of great personal value to His disciples. The disciples would be able to love and

train any of the peoples of this world without trying to make them culturally Jewish. And they would be able to appreciate all cultures and minister in all cultures—*without bias.* So they were and so they did.

Our Focus Should be Limited to Helping the Hindu with His Spiritual Dharma, Not His Social Dharma

Dharma is the Hindi word for *duty* or *obligation.* In Hinduism, two *dharmas* apply to each person's life: 1) a *social* dharma, and 2) a *religious* (spiritual) dharma. Each Hindu has a unique set of social and religious obligations. Quite unlike in the West, Indian society distinguishes clearly between the two. Social duties are dictated primarily by the expectations and traditions of one's parents and extended family; one's caste, sex, age (and stage in life), and birth order (especially if one is the oldest son); as well as the peculiar customs and leadership of one's locale, the social obligations taught by one's religion (there are many streams of Hindu belief), the laws of the land, etc. Thus, a person has no choice in relation to his social dharma: he is born with it.

A closer look at the general obligations of social dharma reveals that most are virtuous (and many even scriptural). In the West, such duties would be considered simply as what is required to be a good citizen, a good family member or a good member of the community. Certainly, some overlap exists between a Hindu's social dharma and the traditional religious practices that must at times be avoided. In general, however, the social dharma of the Hindu mainly involves worthy pursuits.

By and large, Indian culture strongly emphasizes the community over the individual. In other words, one is expected to be guided by what is good for one's family, one's extended family

and one's community in general, rather than by what is best for oneself. Thus, in the mind of the average Hindu, conformance to one's social dharma is of utmost importance; there is little tolerance for deviation from this norm.

On the other hand, almost complete freedom of choice exists in relation to one's religious dharma. From the myriad of Hindu gods, the deity-devotion based Hindu is free to choose which combination of gods he (or she) wants to worship (a much smaller percentage follows the highly philosophical self-realization based stream of Hinduism). Members of the same family will often worship different gods or sets of gods. Some go on to follow god-men, while others choose to take on gurus. With the worship of each god come religious duties appropriate to that god. But for most Hindus, devotion to their god (or their self-realization practices) remains a private matter. One Hindu's choices should not upset any another Hindu. So without offending anyone, an individual can at any time change his mind and choose another god or set of gods for worship, or may adopt a new philosophy to follow. One may also freely adopt, change or relinquish gurus or god-men at will.

Obviously the absolute degree of individual religious freedom varies from region to region, and from one individual situation to another. Fear of the majority in one's own community may restrict the choice of some. And there are communal areas in northern India where such freedom may not be universally available and where the two dharmas overlap significantly. But on the whole, freedom in one's religious dharma is the norm.

Importance of Social Dharma in a Hindu's Spiritual Decision Making Process

Today, too many Western missionaries in India continue to strongly endorse and implement the *cultural extraction practices of the past.* Their only real justification for this is the perceived need to protect the new Hindu babe in Christ from reverting back to the "evils" of his culture.
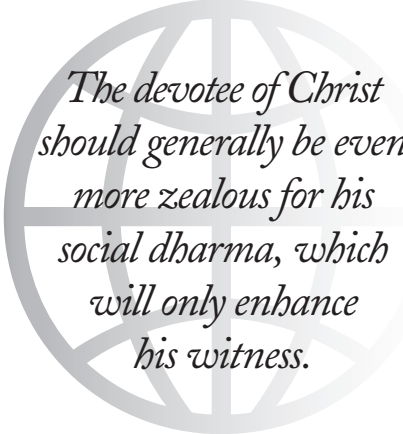
The concern is that he will return to the very cultural "evils" from which Christ has "freed" him. Certainly the Hindu follower of Christ needs to be extracted from his religious dharma. But because what is spiritual and what is cultural is not clearly distinguished in the West (see *Appendix A*), these Western mentors view the religious and social dharmas as a single whole. Thus, they seek to shift the person out of his social dharma (his life in his family and community) and into the highly westernized Indian Christian sub-culture. To accomplish this they must teach the babe in Christ that his social dharma is evil. And as he begins to forsake his community responsibilities, *the offense begins.*

In general, when a person living in the Hindu culture decides to take a new god and make it his sole god, his community takes no offense as long as he continues to conform to his social dharma. And if, because of this god, he becomes even more zealous for his social dharma (despite incorporating a number of unusual practices in his religious life and even dropping several items of his social dharma), again no one generally takes offense. On the contrary, his stature will normally rise in the eyes of his community. Why? It is because he has become more committed to his community through increased commitment to his social dharma. If, on the other hand, the tenets of this new god go against the devotee's social dharma, so that increased devotion to this god leads him to neglect his obligations to his community, people will object. Why? It is because he has become less committed to his community, having turned from his social dharma.

Most Hindu seekers will be interested in discovering more about a new god only if they see an increased dedication to community in the lives of the new god's devotees. However, if this god requires the devotee to reject many elements of his social dharma, the seeker may be turned off. In this case, the community may either discourage the person from his new devotion or reject him outright, depending in part upon the degree to which he has shamed his immediate family in the eyes of his community.

Even if the new adopted god happens to be Jesus Christ, if the devotee remains faithful to most aspects of his social dharma, focusing instead on appropriate changes in his religious dharma, there need not be too much offense or opposition. In fact, most aspects of a typical social dharma are based on what is good for the community (honoring and caring for one's parents, showing respect and deference to other family members and village elders, etc.) and are

> *The devotee of Christ should generally be even more zealous for his social dharma, which will only enhance his witness.*

righteous duties in the biblical sense. Indeed, the devotee of Christ should generally be even more zealous for his social dharma, which will only greatly enhance his witness.

Since Indian culture is tolerant of differences in spiritual dharma, most communities should accept someone who has taken Christ and at the same time is increasing his commitment to his social dharma. For this outcome to be fully realized, the new believer must adopt a contextualized form of religious observance (in the conduct of his religious dharma), not a Western form. If he does this, in time the new believer should be more respected than before. Why? Again, it's because of his increased zeal for his social dharma.

However, in areas where there have been many who have adopted Jesus Christ in the past and who have subsequently turned their backs on their social dharma, the new devotee's community may already be preconditioned against Christ. In such places, Jesus is often viewed as a foreign god and the people who adopt Him as having sold out to the West.

In such cases, the new Christ devotee would do well both initially (and for a long time afterward) to let his light shine brightly through his increased zeal for his social dharma alone. He should allow adequate time to pass before revealing to his community the change in his religious dharma. In this way, he can hopefully overcome his community's negative preconditioning. In addition, he should never refer to himself as "a Christian", but as a Hindu (Muslim, etc.) devotee of Jesus Christ. In India the title "Christian" identifies one as a follower of both a Western (foreign) religion and of the Western Christian sub-culture. To many (if not most) Hindus it implies that the person has shifted allegiance to the West and rejected his own heritage. Thus, the term "Christian" is an incorrect label for someone who has wisely chosen to maintain his social dharma.

The secularization of India has brought many changes to some parts of the culture. Indeed, in several of the largest cities of India and even in the villages of some areas, at least a partial breakdown in the social dharma system has occurred. In these places, one factor of social control is what could be called the "school of fish" model. In such situations, the individual is more like a little fish within a larger school of fish. He moves about without attempting to determine his direction of travel, which is instead somehow determined by the movements of the "school" as a whole. Note, however, that it is *what is important to the "school" that is also most important to the individual "fish"*. He puts the school's community requirements above his own. Therefore, just as in the social dharma system, the convictions and needs of the individual are not necessarily respected where the "school of fish" pattern prevails.

In other pockets of the culture, where individualism is on the rise, the social

dharma observations shared here may not be valid for some areas of one's life. Whether the source of many of these changes is postmodernism (for certain segments of the intelligentsia) or a craze for American "hip hop" culture (among some of the middle and upper middle class youth), the Western missionary can make great gains by using modified versions of the contemporary methods developed to reach these same groups in the West.

One limiting factor is that before coming to India, most Western missionaries (whom I have observed) have not previously been involved in such ministries in the West itself. Thus they have not undergone the "reconditioning" required to implement such methodologies. And those Western missionaries who have attempted to work in these areas must understand that, to some extent at least, the "school of fish" mentality may still overshadow the individualism emerging in both of these secularized groups. Those Western missionary engaging these pockets of the culture may thus still have to focus more on the "school" and less on the individual "fish."

Yet, despite these three counter developments, after marriage (in many cases) or the death of a parent (in other cases), a good number of these often will re-adhere to some parts (or even all) of their social dharma. And many of India's "Pepsi" culture who tend to "go with the flow" while away from home will revert instantly to their social dharmas as soon as they walk through the door of their parents' home.

Even those who have received highly advanced academic training in the West and who have returned to India with very liberal attitudes will often revert to their social dharmas, either partially or totally. The reason is that, in practice, the Hindu religion often revolves around the wife. So to accommodate one's wife, many westernized, academically trained husbands end up being very religious at home. Also, each family usually has its own saint figure (some elder within the family), who is the authority in

*A*nd if he ever does revert to his community, he is thereafter only able to view himself as a traitor to Christ—rather than an obedient disciple.

religious matters, and the family may subscribe to some guru as well. Thus, many "open minded" Indians with substantial Western exposure will, in practice, revert to their social dharma for the sake of family harmony.

The social dharma system is strongest in the Indian village and will remain so for the foreseeable future. Over 60% of India's more than one billion still live in the villages. Though large hoards of villagers are continually shifting to the cities, most of India's cities are not that progressive. As a result, the vast majority of India will remain under the social dharma system for many decades to come.

The Paramount Need to Keep the New Hindu Convert in His Social Dharma

Perhaps the greatest mistake of the WMM has been its attempt to keep the new convert from fulfilling his social dharma. This mistake flows purely from bigotry. And this disastrous practice is completely out of sync with the practice and performance of the early church in dealing with diverse cultures.[2,13] Paul worked hard to keep the Gentile Church from becoming Jewish in culture and from developing into a distinctive sub-culture. As discussed in the previous section, Christ himself had laid the foundation. And so, at the end of the first century, Mathetes could write concerning the early Church:

> For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe . . . inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has been determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct. [13]

However, because of the heavy negative preconditioning of the West (and the Indian Church), the new Christ devotee being brought into the Church in India is rarely given the chance to

continue in his social dharma. Often, even before he has given his heart to Jesus, he has started to become negatively preconditioned by those seeking to reach him. Upon experiencing the joy of Christ, it is normal for the new babe to readily accept the attitudes and convictions of those who have helped him find the Lord. As a result, it is easy for the new babe to begin to shrink back from the obligations of his social dharma. Before long, irreparable damage has been done to his relationships with his family and community.

Thus, while one more person has been added to the kingdom, many more doors have been permanently and unnecessarily closed to Christ. The members of the devotee's original community are caused to stumble, *but not over the Rock.* And they are offended, and perhaps permanently so, *but not by the gospel.*

If those who had helped this person in his search could had been excited about Hindu culture, and if those following-up on his growth could have encouraged and helped this babe to be more zealous for his social dharma, the outcome could have (and would have) been completely different.

In reality, the Western mentor has created a false temptation for the new Hindu convert. The new babe in Christ is torn away from the very community life wherein his true Lord wants him to thrive and to be a light. He is forced to quench the Spirit's leading. He is deceived into seeing his own inner desire to remain in his community as a temptation to be avoided at all costs. And if he ever does revert to his community, he is thereafter only able to view himself as a traitor to Christ—rather than an obedient disciple.

At the root of this horrible charade is the unbelief of the West, which has only rarely been able to believe that God can empower the disciple of Christ to be in the world while not

being of the world. And those who have come to bring the blessing of God upon the peoples of India have ended up unnecessarily causing far more people to stumble than to respond.

Change Directives for the West

Like Jesus in His time, we today need to swiftly and conclusively take the steps necessary to remove negative preconditioning and the other[2,11] unnecessary hindrances currently impeding the progress of the Gospel in India. To properly implement any of the following suggestions will require very careful consideration of Jesus' example: Attitudes of protest, dogmatism and imperialism (see *Appendix A*) must be absent from this process.

What follows are a number of suggested directives (but due to space limitations, only a bare outline for these suggestions is included). Just as it was hard for John the Baptist and the Apostle Peter to overcome their incorrect preconditioning, we should exhibit great patience as we help many in the Western missionary corps to adopt more helpful perspectives. This process will be painful for all.

Steps to be taken immediately:

1. *Seminary and Bible College Mission programs and Missionary Orientation programs must proactively purge themselves of cultural bigotry.*

Suggested actions:

(a) Conduct self and/or external reviews to evaluate the degree of negative preconditioning present in their programs. (See *Appendix B* for a sample measuring tool that could also be modified for organizational use).

(b) Take all steps necessary to remove this negative preconditioning (Example: replace biased teachers [if retraining has failed] and those portions of the curriculum [including references] that propagate negative preconditioning with those who/which properly equip students with a balanced cultural perspective).

(c) Encourage an organizational ethos that will foster the environment(s) necessary to ensure future immunity to this problem.

2. *Missionary Sending Agencies must eradicate the further export and development of this problem by:*

(a) Following steps (a) through (c) above.

(b) *Only sending out missionaries who are not negatively preconditioned,* screening out all who remain culturally biased even after proper training and orientation has been provided. See

> *This process will be painful for all.*

Appendix B for a sample screening tool for use in assessing the cultural sensitivity profile of an individual. Rationale: (1) those still negatively preconditioned will do more harm than good, and (2) this frees up Western funds to better support those who can make a much stronger contribution.

(c) *Requiring all new Western missionaries to India to focus exclusively on those who are culturally Hindu (or Muslim, Parsi, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist),* not on those of the negatively preconditioned Indian Church). Rationale: see points given in [2] under "Proposed Solutions to the Problem of Superiority of Culture."

(d) *Allowing new missionaries to bond to their ministry cultures* by giving them opportunity to experience the culture first hand without initial oversight (with its interpretation of the culture) or by at least shielding them (especially during their initial years in India) from the oversight of missionaries who have been identified with the old negatively-preconditioned mindset.

Steps to be implemented long term:

1. We should seriously re-evaluate how negative preconditioning is minimizing the impact of the Evangelical movement on the primary (secular) culture of the West itself and take concrete steps to reconstruct the Evangelical sub-culture into a movement devoid of bias, dogmatism and a spirit of protest (see Appendix A).*

2. The *training of all laborers in the West* for service in both the West and East should *include* many of the same *Christ principles* used by the Master *in removing the negative preconditioning* responsible for the initial bigotry *of the Twelve.*[2] **

(* Because of the diverse and dispersed nature of Protestantism this can only be done by denominations and organizations individually. Internal assessment should be via self devised formats akin to the model review format for individuals provided in *Appendix B* [though highly modified].)

(** Toward this end a manuscript is being developed by the author, but many more efforts in this direction are needed.)

Conclusion

This article highlights some of the devastating eternal effects of cultural bigotry on the Indian Hindu. Together with *Appendix A* it also examines several of the causes of this fatal gospel stumbling block. With a view to helping make these effects more visible to the Western eye, it also explores (jointly with *Appendix A*) some of the peculiarities in the Western psyche that are at the root of this obstacle. Finally, a number of challenging practical

*I*t was in this isolation that the boundaries between what is cultural and what is essential to the Christian faith became more blurred in Western Europe.

solutions are recommended, the three most important being:

- Those Western missionaries serving in India should shift to an exclusive focus on those who are culturally Hindu (and/or Muslim, Parsi, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist).

- Those Westerner missionaries seeking to point Hindus to Christ should demonstrate a genuine excitement for Hindu culture. To this end it is suggested that the ability of the Westerner to operate with such excitement will flow from a mastery of Christ's training program for bigotry removal (for self and others).

- Those Western missionaries functioning as mentors of Hindu Christ followers should encourage and help the new believer to be more zealous for his individual social dharma than he was before finding faith in Christ. (True also for the new Jain and Sikh Christ believers.)

The main purpose of these suggested solutions is to minimize unnecessary offense in India so that, in the future, the Gospel may progress much more quickly. We can ill afford to send anymore missionaries to India who are still negatively preconditioned by the distorted notions responsible for Western bigotry. And we certainly cannot allow this needless and lethal offense to continue in India any longer. **IJFM**

References

[1] P. Stearns, D. Schwartz and B. Beyer, *World History Traditions and New Directions,* Addison-Wesley, 1989.

[2] D. Pani, "Fatal Hindu Gospel Stumbling Blocks," *IJFM,* 18.1, 2001.

[3] A. Shourie, *Harvesting Our Souls: Missionaries, Their Design, Their Claims,* ASA Pub., N. Delhi, 2000.

[4] Herbert Hoefer, *Churchless Christianity,* William Carey Library, 2001.

[5] Luke 7:19.

[6] Luke 7:23.

[7] Galatians 2:14.

[8] I Corinthians 13:12.

[9] Matthew 18:17.

[10] V. Mangalwadi, *Truth and Social Reform,* Third Edition, Nivedit Good Books, Mussoorie, 1996.

[11] D. Pani, "Submission to Oppression in India: Lessons from History," IJFM, 18.1, 2001.

[12] Matthew 12:19, Isaiah 42:2.

[13] Mathetes, *The Epistle to Diognetus,* (A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, Editors, Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. I, Hendrickson Pub., 1995.)

[14] I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* St. Martin's Press, New York, 1965 (1781).

[15] W. Gitt, *In the Beginning was Information,* Christliche Literatur-Verbreitung, E. V., Bielefeld, 1997.

Appendix A

The problem of cultural bias stems in part from the West's reliance on linear (Platonic) thinking to process information. This, in turn, fuels an inclination for dogmatism[14] and makes the Western world extremely slow to embrace logical paradigm shifts.[15] Thus, even when the data overwhelmingly exposes the fallacy of a prevailing model, the Western Church is in general initially resistant to new paradigms.

While there are many reasons for this and for the West's continued biased thinking concerning Eastern culture, only four factors will be examined, of which the first three have historical roots.

The Isolation of the West from the East

Major church centers emerged in the early church in Africa, Asia and Europe. For some time, these centers remained in close communication with one another and provided mutual accountability. This interaction further helped to keep the Western centers in touch with both the actual cultures of the Scriptures and with the Easternness of the nonlinear thinking processes behind much of these Scriptures.

With the advance of Islam, ready contact with these African and Asian centers was lost. Soon the spiritual vitality and the "Easternness" of three of these centers began to deteriorate. Also, over time, the Latin center (Rome) became increasingly separated from the only remaining European center, Constantinople. Because of its proximity, Constantinople remained in closer touch with the Muslim Middle East, whose thinking (logic) was also becoming modified from the nonlinear Eastern thinking (logic) processes of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. With time, the Latin rift with Byzantine Constantinople grew, and with it the Western Church and the Asian East grew even further apart. It was in this isolation that the boundaries between what is cultural and what is essential to the Christian faith became more blurred in Western Europe.

Visible imbalances emerged as a consequence of this isolation. But Rome had a very wise way of handling some of the powerful reformers and prophets that arose in Western Europe. As God provided new movements to bring balance and to meet needs being overlooked by the Western center, the Latin Church would often recognize these movements, along with their leaders. These movements would be incorporated into the Church as new orders. This brought great energy back into the Western Church and helped to keep it vital. However, it also caused many of these great movements of God to become minimized over time. By keeping these movements in check through recognition, this practice fostered accommodation to the emerging dominance of culture-based "spiritual tradition" (hereafter simply labeled "tradition"). And as tradition slowly rose up to the place where it nearly totally dominated over revelation (the Scriptures) as the sole guiding light for the Western Church, a spirit of general dogmatism and cultural dogmatism (hereafter simply labeled "dogmatism") also arose and grew. And because of the Western Church's isolation, all of this worked to cause the distinction between what

is cultural and what is scriptural to become even more obscure.

The Crusades worked primarily to strengthen the dominance of the Latin Church's center (Rome) and to bias the Western Church further against other cultures. And as the power of Rome grew, so did this spirit of dogmatism.

The Reformation

Part of the thrust of the Reformation was to dethrone the supremacy of *tradition* by elevating the Judeo-Christian *revelation* (the Scriptures) in its place. Though the Reformation could correct some of the Western spiritual drift, unfortunately the movements it launched inherited part of the Latin Church's spirit of dogmatism and added to it a spirit of protest. These attitudes, coupled with the earlier loss of the Easternness of the Scriptures and the inherited inability to distinguish between what is purely cultural and what is spiritual, all worked together to limit the effectiveness of the Reformation.
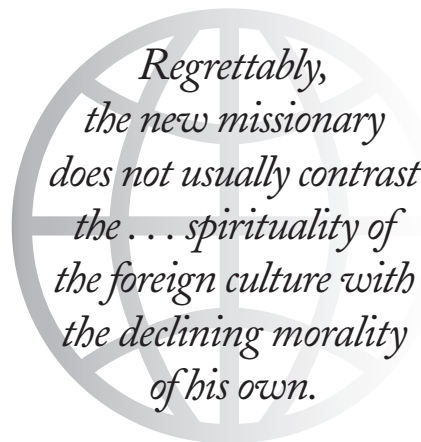
Note that almost from the beginning, the Reformation had to compete with the European Enlightenment, which elevated Greek variants of *reason* as supreme *instead*. In this battle, Protestantism relied (and continues to rely) heavily on the inherited cultural perspectives of its founding giants. Moreover, as it lost ground in this battle, Protestantism's retreat forced it to reduce its contact with segments of Western culture. Unfortunately, in the face of its newest threat (Post-modernism), the Protestant movement has continued to react by seeking in some cases to isolate itself even further culturally. In most Western settings, the movement has developed a strong bias against *secular Western culture* (which we must call the *"primary"* culture of the West).

Finally, it is crucial to understand that in order to survive in the face of such threats, the Protestant movement has had to remain dogmatic in its approach to truth. Thus, its preconditioning concerning the evilness of "pagan" cultures and the belief in the universality of its own religious forms continues to survive. And because bias against its own prevailing (primary) culture(s) pervades the movement today, it is almost completely blind to the need to turn away from its prejudice against the cultures of the "pagan" non-West.

Imperialism/technology/military might

Westerners are generally so accustomed to the lifestyles that their technology and wealth provide, that when they encounter peoples of cultures with "less advanced" lifestyles (technologically and materially), they often assume themselves more advanced. The culture being encoun-

Regrettably, the new missionary does not usually contrast the . . . spirituality of the foreign culture with the declining morality of his own.

tered may be ahead of their own sociologically, philosophically, and in other ways, yet they still generally maintain such assumptions and attitudes. And the Western missionary is no exception.

Some of these attitudes and assumptions originated during the era of Western imperialism when much of the world was under Western domination. In history, the conqueror usually considers himself superior to those whom he has conquered, though not always with respect to culture. There are examples of conquerors even adopting the culture of those they have conquered (e.g., *the Hellenistic rule of Persia after Alexander the Great's takeover)*. However, such examples are almost non-existent for the West during the past 500 years.

Today Western military imperialism is mostly a memory. Yet, the US (and to a lesser extent many other Western countries) continue to take pride in their military superiority over the less militarily advanced countries. In general, those who are stronger militarily consider themselves superior (and more privileged) than those who are weaker. The more materially wealthy assume themselves better (and more privileged) than those with less wealth. This is human nature. Most Westerners consider their wealth and military might as marks of cultural superiority. Certainly the level of superiority of a culture is much more than wealth plus technology plus military might plus past dominance. Yet, for the missionary going into another culture, there is an additional comparative factor of even greater significance.

Religious sub-cultural pride

In addition to these historical factors is the far more important reality of religious sub-cultural pride. The missionary going to serve in a foreign culture has not only come out of a "primary" culture, but also from a "Christian" sub-culture. And from the latter (his sub-culture) he may be filled with extensive religious preconditioning. For the Western missionary, this preconditioning has a long history. Just as the religious Jews of Christ's time viewed all Gentiles as unclean dogs not worthy of entering their homes, so Western Christians have been taught for over a millennium and a half to think of those of all other religions as "pagan," Satan-controlled and evil. Regrettably, the new missionary does not usually contrast the righteousness and spirituality of the foreign culture with the declining morality of his own. Instead he will make such contrasts through the prism of his sub-culture of origin.

As mentioned, there is usually no clear distinction in the mind of the Western missionary as to where culture ends and where religion begins. Therefore, the bigotry problem faced by the missionary in his new culture stems in part from his inability to distinguish between "true spirituality" and the purely cultural aspects of his own sub-culture. Thus, the new culture (or much in the new culture) is often seen as evil. In reality, much of what the Western Christian considers spiritual in his own milieu is in fact

really only cultural. Thus, because the distinction between what is cultural and what is spiritual is unclear to him, the Western missionary will inadvertently seek to export the cultural (or more properly the sub-cultural) aspects of his "faith" (music, worship practices, organizational models, time usage perception, relational patterns, personal liberty precedents, dress standards, denominational/organizational ethos, training methodologies, world view perspectives, etc.) along with the spiritual, while thinking both to be "spiritual" and thus both to be "universal." Moreover, *this dogmatism, which considers the Western religious form to be universal, has greatly compounded the Hindu stumbling block* we have been attempting to better define.

Appendix B: Sample Cultural Bigotry Survey

Sample tool for the evaluation of individuals (to help locate sources and degrees of cultural bigotry in potential or ministering 10/40 window laborers of North American [hereafter "American"] origins):

Directions: To be administered orally. Subtracting and weighted averaging to be done by survey administrators only afterward. All results (not just weighted scores) are to be recorded.

1. (A.) In your 10/40 country of focus, to what degree (0-10) do you feel that it is necessary to extract (out of their community) those you see come to Christ (in order to assimilate them into the churches of the pre-existing or newly created Christian sub-cultures)? (10 for total extraction, 5 for status quo [no extraction], 0 for helping converts to become far more integrated into their own community) Degree ____. Subtract Degree from 10 for Answer ___; (B.) If you are seeking to work with Muslims, where on the C (Contextualization) scale *does/do you anticipate* your ministry (to) fall? If your answer is less than 5 (i.e. lower than C5), multiply the result by 2.5. If your answer is 5 or greater,

put 10. If you do not know or are not working with Muslims, leave blank. Result ___. Average of (A.) and (B.) (or only the score of A- if B's answer is left blank) ___.

2. (A.) Relative to American culture (with a score of 10), to what level do you feel the 10/40 culture in which you *hope to be/are* serving has as much to offer you personally and the world in general (i.e., culturally)? (0 - nothing 10 - the same or more,) (Country_____) Answer ___; (B.) Degree of respect (scale of 0-10) that you hold for the heritage, attainments and strengths of the 10/40 culture of your focus (relative to American culture with a score of 10)? (0- no respect, 10 – same or more respect) Answer ___. Average of (A.) and (B.) ____.

3. To what degree do you consider your own denomination's (or your organization's [if you are more theologically orientated toward the latter]) biblical theology to be pure from syncretism? (10 for 100% pure, 0 for 80% or less pure) Degree ____. Subtract Degree from 10 ____.

4. (A.) To what degree do you consider your own denomination's (or your organization's [if your worship preference is more orientated toward the latter]) manner of religious expression in worship to be superior to other worship forms? (10 clearly superior to most, 0 in no way superior) Answer ___; (B.) To what degree do you consider the overall form of Christianity that you follow (when you are in America) to be superior in comparison to the other standard but fairly dissimilar forms practiced in America (0 for no superiority, 10 for highly superior)? (Examples: Protestant vs. Catholic or Orthodox, Charismatic vs. Evangelical, Contemporary vs. Traditional) Answer ____. Average of (A.)

and (B.) ____. Subtract Average from 10 ____.

5. (A.) When you were living in you own country, how many non-Christian friends did you have (on the average) for every 10 Christian friends? Answer ___; (B.) Scale (0-10) the degree of empathy (compassion, concern, burden, etc.) that you hold for your non-Christian family members in comparison to that you hold for your Christian family members. (0 for "none", 10 for "the same") Answer ____. (C.) On a scale of 0-10, how comfortable do you feel spending time with non-Christians compared to spending time with Christians? (10 for "the same") Answer ____. Addition of (A.) + (B.) + (C.) ____.

6. (A.) On a scale of 0-10, how would you evaluate your interest in having a general knowledge of the non-religious facts and trivia that those in the 10/40 window country (in which you *hope to be/are* serving) would consider important? (10 for having a very high interest) Answer ___; (B.) On a scale of 0-10, how would you describe the level of your general knowledge of the non-religious facts and trivia that those in the 10/40 window country in which you *hope to be/are* serving would consider important? (10 for having a high knowledge, relative to your time of association with this country) Answer ____. Average of (A.) and (B.) ____.

7. To what degree (on a scale of 0-10) are you willing and eager (0 for unwilling, 10 for most eager) to learn from: (a.) Children and those much younger than you? ____, (b.) Individuals who are much less educated than you? ___, (c.) Irregular individuals (deformed, "sinners", marginals, etc.)? ____, (d.) Educated secular North American non-Christians? ____, (e.) Educated foreign non-Christians with brown* (Afro, Arab, Persian,

Indian, etc.) or yellow* (Mongol, Chinese, etc.) skin? ____. (* answer based on the dominant skin color of the peoples you *hope to be/are* ministering to in your 10/40 country) Average for these five categories (max of 10) ____.

8. To what degree (0-10) do you consider yourself able to enjoy meaningful (in depth) personal friendships (0 for unable, 10 for most able) with (a.) - (e.) above (in question 7.) ? (a.) ____, (b.) ____, (c.) ____, (d.) ____, (e.) ____. Average for these five categories (max of 10) ____.

9. On a scale of 0-10, how happy would you feel about one of your children (if you have or were to have children) marrying a Christ convert from the peoples of the 10/40 window country to which you *hope to be/are* serving? Answer ____.

10. (A.) To what degree do you consider the "legalized public aspects" of American secular culture to be evil today? (10 – totally evil, 0 – acceptably pure) Answer ____; (B.) To what degree to you consider to 10/40 culture you *hope to be/are* serving in to be demonic? (10 - totally demonic, 0 – acceptably pure) Answer ____. Average of (A.) and (B.) ____. Subtract Average from 10 ____.

11. In 10/40 cultures where human rights are being violated, what degree of priority (0-10) would/do you place on preparing new converts to endure oppression compared to the priority you *would/do* place on alleviating the oppression of converts (by both giving them upward mobility and by helping them to stand/rebel against their oppressors)? (0 for no priority for preparing them to endure oppression and thus maximum priority for alleviating their oppression , 5 for equal priority, 10 for maximum priority for preparing them to endure oppression thus no priority for alleviating their oppression, etc.) Answer ____.

12. (A.) For the sake of Kingdom growth, concerning your children (or future children) to what degree (0-10) do you feel that an equivalent diploma from a good fully-accredited secular college is in general preferable to a diploma in the same field from an equally good fully accredited Christian college? (10 for secular degree most preferable, 5 for equal, 0 not an option) Answer ____. (B.) For the sake of the Kingdom, concerning your children (or future children), to what degree (0-10) do you feel that a secular diploma from a fully accredited secular college is in general preferable to a degree in the same area from an unaccredited Christian college? (10 for secular most preferable, 3 for equal, 0 not an option) Answer ____. (C.) For the sake of the Kingdom, concerning those that you mentored in the US before your going to the field, to what degree (0-10) do you *in general* consider their pursuit of service in full time ministry preferable to their seeking secular employment combined with lay ministry? (10 for most preferable, 7 for preferable, 3 for equal, 0 for least preferable)? Degree ____. Subtract Degree from 10 for Answer ____. Answer addition of (A.) + (B.) + (C.) ____.

13. In comparison to the general social sophistication (and level of community) of a culture, to what degree (0-10) do you view *(in general)* the level of technological and material advancement of the culture to be the *prime measure of the culture's greatness?* (10 if you view the technical/material as [in general] having absolute importance, 3 if you view it as having the same importance, 0 if you view it as having somewhat less importance than the social) Answer ____. Subtract Answer from 10 ____.

14. To what degree (0-10) do you feel it is your role to help directly reform the culture of the peoples you *hope to be/are* serving among? (10 hope to completely reform the culture, 0 do not intend to work directly to reform the culture) Answer ____. Subtract Answer from 10 ____.

15. When your ministry agenda is threatened by cultural norms (such as the high priority [in the lives of those you are helping] on community [family and extended family], or on education, or on secular employment, etc.), to what degree do you attribute such threats to the evilness of the culture and/or to spiritual warfare? (10 - most of the time, 0 - only some of the time) Answer ____. Subtract Answer from 10 ____.

16. What portion of your 10/40 culture (that you *hope to be/are* serving in) do you view as morally neutral (in comparison to that portion that you view as morally objectionable)? (0 for most is neutral, 10 for most is objectionable) Answer ____. Subtract Answer from 10 ____.

17. (A.) In your home of origin, to what degree do you think of those outside of Christ as the conspiratorial "they" (compared to those you consider among your non-conspiratorial "we")? (10 most outside are among the conspiratorial "they", 0 none outside are among the "they") Answer ____; (B.) In your 10/40 country of your (intended) focus, to what degree do you think of those of other non-Christian religions as the conspiratorial "they" (compared to those you consider among your non-conspiratorial "we")? (10 most in the non-Christian religions are among the conspiratorial "they", 0 none are among the "they") Answer ____. Average of (A.) and (B.) ____. Subtract Average from 10 ____.

18. (A.) To what degree (0-10) do you consider the death of 10

Americans to be of more of a tragedy than the death of 10 persons in the 10/40 window country in which you *hope to be/are* serving? (0 for same degree, 10 for much more of a degree) Answer ____; (B.) To what degree do you feel unhappy (uneasy) about the immigration of representative (*) individuals from the 10/40 window to you home country? (10 for most unhappy (most uneasy), 5 for neither happy nor unhappy, 0 for most happy) (* representative means typical [and thus not terrorists, drug mafia, etc.]) Answer ____. Average of (A.) and (B.) ____. Subtract Average from 10 ____.

19. (A.) To what degree (0-10) do you resent the national agendas of your 10/40 country (of focus) that run contrary to your Kingdom agendas (for this 10/40 country). (10 strong resentment, 0 no resentment) Answer ____; (B.) To what degree (0-10) do you resent the national agendas of your 10/40 country (of focus) that run contrary to the national agendas of your country of origin? (10 strong resentment, 0 no resentment) Answer ____; (C.) To what degree (0-10) do/would you feel threatened by the nationalism shown by those that you are ministering to in your 10/40 country? (10 strongly threatened, 0 not threatened at all) Answer ____. Addition of (A.) + (B.) + (C.) ____ Subtract the Addition from 10 ____.

20. (A.) In your country of focus, to what degree (0-10) are/will you focus on those from pre-existing cultures that are non-Christian compared to those from pre-existing Christian cultures? (10 for exclusive focus on those from non-Christian cultures) Answer ____; (B.) Using a scale of 0-10, describe the effort you *have made/intend to make* to understand the unique ways of thinking (mental processing) of the non-Christian culture(s) in you 10/40 window area of focus. (0-no effort, 10-extremely strong effort) Answer ____. Average of (A.) and (B.) ____.

Organization Personnel or Training Executives may write to *ddpani@att.net* for help in the interpretation of survey results.