

Cultivating Reticence: The Supportive Role of the Alongsider in Hindu Ministry

by H. L. Richard

The emergence of a global Christianity with thousands of local expressions raises again the question and problem of the cross-cultural worker. Particularly when Western missionaries have a record of failure in the Hindu world, is it perhaps time to throw in the towel and let others do the job? But the Hindu world remains a challenge beyond comprehension, and engagement by non-Hindu disciples of Jesus is essential. With tens of thousands of Hindus now resident in cities throughout the Western world, rather than withdrawal, there is a need for new terms of engagement with Hindus by Western followers of Jesus—terms that must be radically revised from the *modus operandi* of earlier missionary encounters.

This paper assumes the legitimacy of insider movements, although it recognizes that there is a wide range of insider phenomena and, like with all church movements, there are some expressions that are not particularly healthy. Another crucial assumption is that insiders need to be the decision makers, and outsiders who take a role of standing alongside need to *cultivate reticence* and insist on the principle that leadership must come from those within. As my experience is with Hindu contexts, the focus of this paper will be on work among Hindus in relation to Hindus who are in Christ, although the principles stated certainly can apply to other contexts as well.¹

John and Anna Travis contributed a stimulating and helpful paper on the role of alongsiders in *IJFM* 30:4 (Winter 2013). I originally shared a first draft of the thoughts presented here at a Rethinking Forum (RF) gathering in April of 2012, and was encouraged by some at that time to share those thoughts more publicly. I developed the material further at two later RF gatherings, leading to the current presentation, which retains some of its original oral flavor. My thoughts complement but also at times supplement those outlined in the Travis' article, so this paper is presented to further the discussion begun by my esteemed colleagues who originated this "alongsider" terminology.

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Four Roles of the Alongsider

My attempt at summarization has resulted in this presentation of *four roles* and *four qualifications* for outsiders to be effective alongsiders. Readers are welcome to mix and match these with John and Anna's *six challenges* and *seven roles* and come up with new configurations. One vitally important issue precedes any discussion of roles and qualifications, and that is the matter of one's identity: Who are you? What are you doing? And why do you want to befriend Hindus? You need a clear identity, and that of a salaried worker with a professional career is definitely best. This is an important preliminary topic, but not the focus of this paper, so I will move on to outline the *four roles*.

Role One: Evangelist

Roles are very dependent on spiritual gifts and the calling of God, but also on the situations in which God places us. The first of the four roles is that of an evangelist. There is no more strategic need among Hindus than for evangelists, so if you have this gift you will have great scope to exercise it. I should say here that intercessory prayer and strong personal relationships undergird all of the roles I will describe—but they are most vital for the evangelist. Evangelism is not just sharing a message; it is meeting heart to heart with another person. Everything done effectively among Hindus will be done on a vibrant relational foundation. And we are dealing with the spiritual and eternal, so prayer is vital beyond all measure. I don't think there are many truly gifted evangelists around, and even such persons will find a patient process is necessary with Hindus. Nevertheless, we can all aspire to learn (and practice) what is involved in evangelism and ultimately to become effective evangelists.²

Role Two: Discipleship

The second role relates to discipling or coaching gifts.³ The tragedy in mission history which has been repeated regularly up to the present time is that

Hindus who come to Christ are not properly or adequately assisted to grow in their faith. If you have discipling gifts, there is a huge scope for ministry among Hindus. This role can be further divided into three areas where discipleship is needed; biblical coaching, pastoral coaching, and missiological coaching. Very possibly people will end up focused on just one of these three areas. Once again, I am assuming a foundation of deep relationships and prayer. While all valid discipleship must be based on the Bible, the first aspect to be emphasized here is a discipleship into biblical understanding. (This will be by far the largest subsection of this paper, as this point is important and is particularly complex in ministry to Hindus.)



Everyone recognizes the need to develop biblical understanding in Hindus who turn to Christ, but the common process of sending a Hindu who is new in Christ off to a Bible college is deeply harmful. This necessarily removes a person from their familiar context and introduces alien Western thought patterns. Perhaps still worse, particularly in India, attendance at a Bible college is almost inevitably a step into the world of dependence on Western financing. Not a few Hindus in Christ have found Bible colleges suffocating, and have abandoned their course of study. Many others have become fine Christian leaders, but Bible college graduates usually do not go on to make a significant impact in

their own Hindu family or community, largely due to the foreignness of the Christianity they absorbed in the course of study.

Discipling a Hindu into maturity in Christ within his or her Hindu context is a massive challenge. There are no current programs or curricula that can be followed. And the vast variety of Hindu contexts should indicate to us that many different expressions of discipleship to Jesus need to develop with varying terminologies and emphases. (This is comparable to the hundreds of theologically acceptable—shall we say orthodox—denominations that have developed in the West with their various distinctions, all the while centering on the resurrected Christ.) History illustrates the challenge of moving beyond accepted Evangelical formulas in teaching the Bible to Hindus, but it is a necessary venture if a long-term impact is desired.

In 2008, the Rethinking Forum produced a document in lieu of a traditional statement of faith. This perhaps gives further insight into the matter of not imposing traditional understandings of biblical faith.

The Rethinking Forum was formed in 2001 as a network of like-minded people committed to the birthing and development of Christ-centered movements in Hindu cultures and communities. The primary representatives of Jesus in the Hindu world will be Hindus who have bowed before the Lordship of Christ and sought refuge in Him. The RF is not particularly for these people, although due to circumstances some from Hindu homes may identify closely with the RF. The RF is more about followers of Jesus from non-Hindu families who sense a call from God to service of Christ in the Hindu world.

Hindus in Christ need to work out their discipleship to Jesus in ways that are natural to their context and which resonate with their traditions and lifestyles. For non-Hindus entering into this process, it is about contextualizing

the gospel for the Hindu world. Non-Hindus need to study carefully and learn about the many aspects of Hindu life and culture and faith and what it means to speak the gospel of Christ into Hindu contexts. Yet this must be a servant role, always recognizing that leadership and decision making rest with Hindus in Christ.

The Hindu world is vast and complex, so multiple Christ-centered movements need to develop among many different Hindu caste and community groups. The movements that develop need to be self-propagating, self-supported, self-governing and self-theologizing, not in any exclusive way but in the healthy sense of leadership and growth from within. The RF network can perhaps play a catalytic role in linking various developing movements for the sake of a larger unity and mutual learning and correction.

The RF and its associates may also be privileged to engage in deep interaction with Hindus in Christ as self-theologizing movements develop in the Hindu world. Western disciples of Christ in the RF network will bring to such discussions their own insights from Western theological traditions. Western theological statements arose out of situations of need and crisis and are neither the only nor the final words for theology. There is great value in studying and understanding those statements, and neglecting the earlier history of disciples of Jesus in other contexts would diminish the vigor of disciples of Jesus in the Hindu world. But different needs and crises will arise among Hindus, and formulas from other cultural contexts will not neatly answer the questions that develop among Hindus.

The RF does not disparage Western doctrinal statements, nor will it encourage Hindu disciples of Christ to neglect insights from Western theological study. Yet we opt not to state our own position with a list of agreed doctrines, in light of our clearly stated purposes and principles above.

This might come across as rather pedantic theorizing, but some practical examples below should clarify why

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this is so important. The core issue is that alongsiders simply do not know exactly what discipleship to Jesus in a particular Hindu context should look like. A process of exploration and development is necessary; decisions must always be made by Hindus due to their intuitive grasp of their own context, and due to the fact that they will live with the repercussions of each decision.

Biblical Coaching

Four core issues in biblical understanding will be briefly considered here. Thinking and speaking about God will be examined first, followed by understanding Jesus Christ and then particularly the exclusivity of Christ. Finally, sin will be discussed. These four topics only illustrate the kind of issues that arise when any biblical concept is taught in Hindu contexts.

1. Understanding God

Growth towards a biblical understanding of God is clearly foundational for all thought and life. But attaining such an understanding is itself a lifelong challenge, and understanding and communicating about God in a Hindu context is not a simple matter. "God" is one of the simplest terms in the English language; among people influenced by a biblical worldview it immediately suggests an almighty creator. But no such connotations are present with any of the many Sanskrit terms that can be (and are) used to translate "God" (*theos/elohim*).

The history of Bible translation in India shows different choices for the core term for God, and there is no reason why uniformity across many languages (or even within a language group) must be sought.⁴ Different Christ-centered Hindu movements may well use different terms (not only for God, but for Lord, grace, faith,

etc.) according to their background and the predilections of the leadership that develops. An alongsider needs to focus on biblical meanings and not the choice of terminology. But this focus must not ignore worldview differences, particularly that Western Christians like neat definitions (not least when related to God), but Hindus tend toward mystery, recognizing that much is beyond human perception and understanding. Extremes in either direction, towards either definition or mystery, can be disastrous for a biblical understanding of God.

2. Understanding Christ

A second complexity relates to the deity of Christ. It is very easy for a Hindu, particularly for a Hindu in Christ, to affirm that "Jesus is God." Most Hindus have a clear conception of an ultimate being who is one. But that ultimate reality is manifested in many ways and forms, so that in practice there is a strong polytheistic element to Hindu life and thought. What, then, does the designation that "Jesus is God" mean within such a worldview? Clearly Jesus was a figure in history, so an affirmation of his divinity in this polytheistic context really means little more than that he is one of many manifestations of the Supreme Being. But, of course, this is *not* the biblical meaning.

The biblical meaning of the deity of Christ is more nuanced than the simple affirmation that "Jesus is God." Technically, Jesus was the name of the man who was God incarnate, and, in a Hindu context, it might be better to altogether drop the phrase "Jesus is God." This has practical implications as well. Since there are so many gods, Hindus at a practical level do not take gods very seriously. Jesus can be affirmed as a god and yet completely

ignored, as there are simply too many gods to pay much attention to beyond a few. When this type of (very common) mindset is encountered, it might be better to emphasize “Jesus as guru,” since among Hindus a guru is an authority to heed and obey, compared to the rather minimal acknowledgement often proffered to gods.

The supreme spirit (*paramātmā*) is generally recognized as the final reality. When speaking English it is advisable to regularly say “the almighty creator God” rather than just “God.” The good news is that this final reality of the universe, the almighty creator God, loves us and sent Jesus to fully reveal himself. When we understand Jesus, we understand God and his love and forgiveness. Of course, Jesus existed prior to his human form, and the Trinitarian mystery will need to be explained as well from passages like John 1:1–4.

3. Understanding the Only Way

Among modern Hindus there is no more difficult topic than the claim that Jesus is the unique savior. This theological issue gets mixed up with colonial history and Christian triumphalism and is usually viewed as extremely arrogant. I’ve never seen this problem stated better than in Hendrik Kraemer’s study for the 1938 World Missionary Conference:

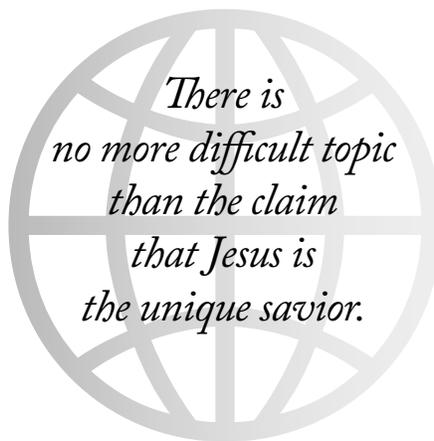
The Hindu mind, by virtue of its historical background, easily hears in the claim for truth and exclusive revelation in Christ a contempt for other religions and a lack of modesty in the face of the great mystery of Ultimate Truth. Christians and missionaries almost as easily make the mistake of conveying the impression that they possess and dispense Ultimate Truth, which in this Indian atmosphere suggests coarse irreverence and vulgar mediocrity, and often is so. (1938, 368)

Questions related to the uniqueness of Christ are the tip of an iceberg; below the surface are questions of humility and respect. When such questions arise, it is imperative for the disciple of Christ

to make clear both that no disrespect for other faith traditions is intended in speaking of Jesus, and that the disciple of Jesus is very far from having an exhaustive understanding of the being and ways of Almighty God. A Hindu who is drawn to Christ should be not be pressured to profess the uniqueness of Christ, but rather should be pointed to passages like John 1:1–4 that show the glory and all-sufficiency of Christ, leaving no room for a comparison with anyone else.

4. Understanding Sin

Finally, sin is another complicated topic in dealing with Hindus, and this includes Hindus in Christ.⁵ Many Hindus are genuinely good people, so their sins are comparable to those of the scribes



and Pharisees of the New Testament, not to those of the publicans and sinners.⁶ In English there is a distinction between sin and evil acts, since most sins are not as socially reprehensible as acts we refer to as evil. Every disciple of Jesus confesses to being a sinner, and the more mature in spiritual understanding also acknowledge an evil heart, but few have done truly evil deeds. This distinction in English, however, is not so clear in Indian languages and in Hindu worldviews. Suggesting that a Hindu is a sinner is close to calling him or her a despicable human being, and the charge is simply ignored as ridiculous.

Apart from this problem of understanding, most Hindus do not come

to Christ due to a sense of sin. This is something of a truism among those involved with Hindu-Christian issues. The truism is that while in the West a sense of sin often leads a person to Christ, among Hindus it is more normative that after coming to Christ one develops an understanding of sin. Vengal Chakkarai, a follower of Christ from a high caste Tamil family, stated it this way in his book *The Cross and Indian Thought*, first published in 1932:

To strike a personal note which our readers may pardon, the writer never felt the awfulness of sin and probably does not feel it now as some of the European Christian *bhaktas* [devotees]. It was fuller acquaintance with Jesus in the beauty of His holiness and matchless and moving character that has made him realize the Protestant feeling of sin and its enormities. In one word, it is the positive character of Jesus that has brought out the negative character of sin as the very opposite of all that He stood for. (Chakkarai 1981, 298–299)

It is Christ himself, his person and his approach to people and to life, which draws Hindus. There can be no biblical objection to people turning to Christ simply because Christ is wonderful; sin and its subtlety and spirituality can best be taught to someone who has humbly surrendered to Christ.

These are just four examples of biblical truths that need to be taught with particular sensitivity in Hindu contexts. But the alongsider needs to learn as much as teach. People need to disciple Hindus into deep biblical knowledge through inductive Bible study sessions over hours and days and weeks on a regular basis, and if it is truly inductive Bible study, the “teacher” will learn a great deal in this process, both with and from Hindu friends.

Pastoral Coaching

There is a second aspect of discipleship that is worth bringing into focus, and that is pastoral discipleship. When a Hindu comes to faith in Christ there

are massive familial and social issues which must be faced. Traditional missions have failed in this area by too casually accepting the rupture of family ties (often even subtly encouraging that break by promoting a change of name and/or diet, attendance at a Bible college, etc.) If you have pastoral gifts, you are needed in Hindu ministry. But just as when teaching the Bible, you need to take an approach of humility—of learning together—because you do not have all the answers for Hindu contexts. Pastoral concerns are even more complex than theological questions. Who has the wisdom to negotiate the problems and challenges of Hindu families?

Issues of caste and idolatry are central, but caste is much less an issue today than in previous generations. “Family” among Hindus is much more than parents and siblings, and this broader meaning is also the biblical meaning. Individualism is assumed in America, but is often deeply unbiblical; don’t make an individualist out of a Hindu and think you are making a disciple of Jesus. The complications of pastoring and assisting a Hindu who is in Christ are many, and every Hindu home practices idolatry with significant differences of intensity and meaning. Outsiders simply cannot answer the complicated questions that arise, but we can support and assist Hindus in “working out their salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12).

If you feel helpless, know that this is how many Hindus in Christ feel: they need pastoral engagement, biblical counsel, and especially encouragement—even just the encouragement that someone cares enough to listen and pray. You cannot say what is right and wrong to do in a Hindu family; you can support someone through his or her failures and successes in Hindu contexts. Older people can perhaps best fill this role, but everyone involved with Hindus will be in this highly sensitive role to some extent.

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Missiological Coaching

Finally related to discipleship, there are missiological issues. This especially is the missing element in traditional mission models. Why has God worked in a particular Hindu’s life? Surely God wants him to impact his own family and people, so how can that happen? What would hinder that? These questions seem never to be asked of Hindus who come to Christ. Attending a local church might be a good way to learn about the Bible, but if it strains or shatters family relationships it is neither wise nor helpful.

This paper is mainly a discussion about roles for alongsiders, but what about the roles of the insiders themselves? How are they to deal with family idolatry and rituals? This is the great gray area, as affirmation of family along with rejection of personal involvement with idolatry do not easily match. A simplistic rejection of everything associated with idolatry means a rejection of the family itself. A pastoral (not merely theological) approach to idolatry needs to be developed which keeps in focus the centrality of the family in God’s plan for human life.⁷

There is a great need for sensitive missiological thinkers in every field where Hindus are hearing about Christ (although the term “missiology” itself is out of place in Hindu contexts, and should not be introduced). God wants a Hindu who turns to Christ to bring blessing to her family, not to alienate her family. In Christ we can affirm the *dharmic* values of the centrality of family and respect for elders. In all teaching and coaching, a concern for being a blessing to the family and clan must always be kept in focus. Sensitive understanding of Hindu life based on case studies from the past, biblical familial examples and the careful discernment of

realities in Hindu families can provide a basis on which Hindus in Christ can find their role among their own people for the kingdom of God.

Biblical, pastoral and missiological aspects of assisting a Hindu in Christ should always be in focus. We do not have answers and even the wise ones among us cannot see clearly all the nuances of other cultural contexts; who is sufficient for these things? God will assist those with discipleship gifts who walk humbly before him alongside Hindu friends.

Role Three: Friendship and Networking

Having invested much in the critical role of discipleship, let me suggest a third role in Hindu ministry that is vitally needed, and one that requires neither an evangelist nor a discipler. If you do not resonate with the first two roles, you can still fill a vital and strategic need in the Hindu world. Friendship and the offering of human encouragement are alone important contributions. There are millions of Hindus in the United States, and few have a Christian friend. If you feel like this is all you have to offer, it is more than enough.

In all the roles outlined here the question of contextual practices by non-Hindus is important and complex. Hindus are rarely, one dares even to say never, offended by sincere engagement by alongsiders in “Hindu” practices such as contextual worship, traditional arts or festivals. The alongsider will never become an insider, but can and should participate in aspects of insider experience not only corporately but even in private life.

A key here is to supplement this role with being alert and willing to link sensitive Hindus to other Hindus who can point them to Christ. Being a

pre-evangelistic contact person might be the most strategic role for a business person. The centrality of festivals in Hindu life means there will be many opportunities to observe and participate in events in Hindu homes, and these opportunities should be embraced without fear. This then opens the opportunity to invite a Hindu who serves Christ to come and share in your home with your Hindu friends during a Hindu or Christian festival. Some work needs to be done to find people who can effectively do this, but it is a strategic supplement to friendship. Be the aroma of Christ among Hindu friends, and network others into the lives of Hindus who are spiritually needy and open. Much prayer and strong relationships are again vital.

Role Four: Artistic Involvement

A fourth role is related to every type of artistic and creative endeavor. Appreciating the place of art has been a huge oversight in Protestant missions and here I will only note the need. Writing is difficult and a lot must be learned before one can even think about writing into the Hindu world. But all types of edifying literature are needed, including better Bible translations that make sense to Hindus. This is certainly a long-term project, but God bless those who take up the development of better literature for Hindus. Painting, drawing, dance and music are all wonderful realms in which to engage Hindus. Don't worry about being an evangelist; just get into that world and be a contact person. Anything related to communication and art needs to be pursued and developed for the glory of God among Hindus. More people need to step into these vitally important roles.

Four Qualifications of the Alongsider

Everyone engaged with Hindus will develop differently, often based on the Hindu God brings into our lives. There will be overlap between the four roles outlined above, and even the four

qualifications discussed below will vary related to roles and gifts, since each person is unique and will bring his or her own specific skill set into Hindu ministry.⁸ Yet these are four general matters that everyone needs to develop.

Qualification One: Biblical Character

First, there are many foundational qualifications which can be summarized as biblical character. The basic biblical character traits and disciplines of biblical understanding, prayer, humility, love, integrity, zeal, submission, transparency and spiritual mindedness must all be manifest and increasing. Most of these are rather obvious and easy to learn about; if only they were as easy to actually learn and live out!



The last one on spiritual mindedness is an old Puritan idea. My point with it is that we should not be centered on doctrines or traditions or rituals, but rather on matters of the heart, on the spiritual core of biblical teaching. In practice this means that as alongsiders we *embrace personal spiritual discipline over perceived correctness of any kind.*

Let me try to illustrate what I mean by this challenging point. We must be ready to say, "Okay, I know I am right on this point, but it is more important for me to be humble and go along with what seems to me to be an error (perhaps a misunderstanding of a biblical text or an unwise act in a family) rather than for me to be right and stand for

the right." This is not about murder and adultery, but certainly relates to caste and idolatry issues as well as biblical interpretation. Even if I think I "know" what should be done, more often than not I should not say anything, considering this a part of the humility and spiritual mindedness essential in cross-cultural situations. Pointing to different biblical passages that may be applicable and sharing stories of other disciples of Jesus faced with similar situations can provide helpful data without usurping decision-making authority. We teach far more by what we do than what we say. To think I always know the right answer and that I should give the answer is modeling something un-Christlike. I must model deep humility. If I always have to give my opinion and state the right answer, I am modeling something else. I need to go along with some things that I am uncomfortable with. As you, in turn, practice this reticence, you will find sometimes that what you "knew to be right" was not actually right, and you will be glad you kept your opinions to yourself.

If you don't have biblical understanding, prayer, humility, love, integrity, zeal, submission, transparency and spiritual mindedness you will find yourself in big trouble; if you think you have all these, then you are in even bigger trouble! Lord, help us to learn these things. Also foundational is basic missiological understanding and cultural sensitivity. Emotional intelligence and cultural intelligence are vital, particularly empathy. These are the core requirements, the biblical character traits that God wants to develop in each of us.

Qualification Two: Acceptance of Limitations

The second qualification for effectiveness among Hindus is the acceptance of your limitations. You must see how little you can really do that is effective, how little you will really even understand. Worse still, you will always do harm. You will always be an outsider. You will

always be severely limited. You will always, by what you *are*, compromise what you *believe* and *teach* (because you are not and cannot be a Hindu disciple of Jesus). From a biblical perspective this should not be a problem, and this perspective should not defeat us as we understand how God uses the weak and inadequate to shame the wise and fulfill his purposes. This is the treasure of God in earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7). This is Paul celebrating weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). Are we ready to learn, and are we constantly learning? After nearly 30 years of study related to Hindu contexts I am constantly surprised by new things that I never heard of before. There is so much diversity in Hindu beliefs and practices. If you need one word for Hinduism, it would be *diversity*. Never assume that you know anything, because really you do not; accept your limitations.

Related to this is the need to be adaptable. This is part of being modern, certainly part of survival in India. The days of missionary visas for India are over, and it is good that there is no longer a colonial government giving shelter. So there is no choice but to be adaptable and to accept change. So accept your many limitations, expect disappointment, and persevere through all types of change, failure, and necessary adaptation.

Qualification Three: Submission to the Leadership of Hindus in Christ

Third, be insistent on submission to leadership from Hindus who are in Christ. That is not easy. It is already a real problem at this stage that more and more internationals are engaging Hindus but there are very few Hindus who are mature in Christ; and Hindus who are mature in Christ need to be engaging Hindus, not primarily internationals. We alongsiders have visions and goals and we can lead, but we cannot afford to minister in our own name; somehow we need to be under the authority of fellow believers who are Hindus in Christ. You may need to work for a decade or more to create this kind of

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situation. Maybe this ideal is simply out of reach for those who serve in North America, but we should be seen to be functioning under our brothers who are Hindus in Christ and we should go to great lengths to make this a reality. We have inherited a terrible history of ministry that can only be considered both colonial and dollar-driven. These are patterns that must be broken and must be manifestly seen to be broken, and I would make this a fundamental requirement for effective ministry.

I remember being invited to a meeting of insider advocates a few years ago and being shocked after arriving there and learning that it was a gathering of insider advocates and their right-hand men (insiders). I did my best to point out that no insider advocate should have a right-hand man or woman, rather they need to *be* right-hand men and women. Initiatives and leadership must come from the insiders, and if we are privileged to serve at the right hand of such people it is a great honor.

Qualification Four: Cultivating Reticence

My last point, mentioned already in the opening paragraph, is that we must *cultivate reticence*. Only the reticent individual can be an effective alongsider. Missiologically it is J. H. Bavinck's *possessio* that defines how we view the gospel and cultures—that we take possession of culture for Christ; but this is triumphalistic and imperialistic despite it being biblical. The key is that this taking possession of cultures is not for internationals to do; we must back off and see that locals do the real thing. This is not my role and responsibility; I am not qualified for this. I must keep backing off and allow others, genuine insiders, to take initiative and move forward. God bless those who want to be right hand persons in this process.

These issues in Hindu ministry are not *our* issues. Internationals are engaging with these matters and internationals are zealous, and while I want to encourage that, I fear we do not know anything about reticence; this is a quality we need to study more carefully and zealously cultivate. We are in the Hindu world as guests, and it is not our world. It is at the largesse of our Hindu friends that we are there; in *all* matters we defer to others, in *all* matters we are constantly stepping back. Even theologically we must shift back from the matter-of-factness of our doctrinal statements to a sense of mystery. Doctrinal statements are often our rather desperate attempts to define biblical mysteries, and usually end up defining those mysteries with extra-biblical terminology. All Protestant doctrinal statements are clear (at least implicitly) that they are not final; they are flawed attempts to explain sacred scripture. We go with the mystery of the infinite and eternal God into the complexity of new languages and cultures. We can help if we truly go to serve, but we need to break many of our own cultural patterns and cultural habits.

Conclusion

It is not unusual to hear calls for cross-cultural workers to become catalysts and change agents. But, technically, a catalyst is the last thing we want to be. In a scientific formula, a catalyst introduces change without itself changing; the greatest enticement of cross-cultural work should be how much a person will be changed by the process of deep engagement with new cultures. Alongsiders especially need to expect to learn and change and experience a transformation themselves that is beyond what they can even imagine. To that end, these roles and qualifications have been outlined. **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹ "Hindu" is a complex label that carries no definite theological connotations. A "Hindu in Christ" is a disciple of Jesus who maintains his familial and cultural and community roles in Hindu society.

² I produced a list of practical pointers for sharing Christ with Hindus that has appeared in a number of different versions over the years; most accessible is "Ten Tips for Ministering to Hindus" at <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/ten-tips-for-ministering-to-hindus>.

³ As I finished editing this paper my co-worker Tim Shultz sent an email about his reading in mentoring and coaching, referencing Gary Collins, *Christian Coaching*, from NavPress. Coaching as distinct from mentoring calls for reticence, recognizing that the coached person must take initiative and develop beyond what the coach suggests.

⁴ I discuss this in "Speaking of God in Sanskrit-Derived Vocabularies," an article forthcoming in the *IJFM*.

⁵ Hindu cultures fit better under the designation of shame cultures than guilt cultures, but this important topic is somewhat tangential to my discussion and so will not be addressed in this paper.

⁶ There is no space to draw out the implications of this point in this paper. A careful study of Jesus' ways with the Pharisees is instructive. One reason for attrition among Hindus who profess Christ in traditional Christian evangelism is that Hindus in Christ are taught to profess what they do not feel; they say they are sinners but they do not understand and have not internalized this reality.

⁷ Often idolatry is not about God or gods, but about family and tradition. Many Christians want to insist on the theological aspect of idolatry even when Hindus minimize this. These types of questions and concerns do not make the issue easy, but rather illustrate that outsiders/alongsiders should not presume to make decisions in this area.

⁸ One of my coworkers, on reading a draft of this paper, suggested that it perhaps assumes modern, educated, independent Hindus, whereas with some Hindus there will be less willingness to take initiative. There can be no blueprints as the personality and gifts of both the alongsider and the Hindu will need to develop with wisdom and humility.

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