

A BRIEF BOOK NOTICE

John B. CARMAN and Chilkuri Vasantha RAO, *Christians in South Indian Villages, 1959-2009: Decline and Revival in Telangana* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2014) pp. xxiv + 242. Pb. \$ 35.00.

This book belongs to a growing Eerdmans series: 'Studies in the History of Christian Missions' (R. E. Frykenberg and B. Stanley, gen. eds.). It is a restudy of the CSI congregations described in P. Y. Luke and J. B. Carman, *Village Christians and Hindu Culture: Study of a Rural Church in Andhra Pradesh, South India* (Lutterworth Press, 1968; reprint, ISPCK, 2009). It opens a window on the life of Christians in the rural Wadiaram pastorate, belonging to the Medak CSI Diocese (South India). It unfolds in 12 chapters and has a 12-page appendix of sermons preached in some Christian communities; a 9-page glossary, a 5-page bibliography, and a 3-page index. There are 12 photographs and 2 maps too.

Chapter 1 ("Studying and Restudying Village Christians") concerns three dimensions of the environment of the Christians described in this book. Chapter 2 ("A Brief History of Developments in Telangana") gives an account of the sociopolitical history of the Telangana region, in particular from the period after Indian independence (1947) and the end of the Nizam's rule (1948), and also highlights its socioeconomic situation. Chapter 3 is a brief overview of "Christianity in India and Telangana". Chapter 4 is on "The Village Religion Surrounding Christians", and gives us a glimpse into the complexity in Christian practices due to borrowings from the surrounding Hindu culture. Chapter 5 deals with "The Older Congregations in the Jangarai Section". Here we find a comparison between the situation in 1959 and recent developments plus a focus on a number of pressing pastoral issues. Chapter 6 is on "The Independent Churches" that have sprung up in the region (some 25 of them, with Pentecostal, independent Baptist, or other evangelical Protestant leanings). Chapter 7 looks especially at "New CSI Congregations of Different Kinds" while Chapter 8 explores "Christian Adaptations of Hindu Practices" (e.g., the *Jathara* festival, music, drama, etc). Chapter 9 focuses on the "Distinctive Beliefs of CSI Christians", particularly as they emerge from Christian responses to a set of questions. Chapter 10 considers the relation between "Healing and Conversion" - something quite instructive. And Chapters 11 and 12 deal with the "Challenges Facing the CSI Congregations" and the "Challenges Facing a Divided Church".

All in all, the book throws much light on small groups of Telangana Christians struggling to maintain their faith amidst numerous trials, attractions and competing interests.

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