Postcolonial Theological Approaches to Hindu-Christian Studies

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Abstract

The disciplinary boundaries of "Hindu-Christian" studies call into question the cultural and political terrain in which it is engendered. As a Christian theologian from India whose encounter with academic Hinduism is as it is taught in the US, my experience is tangential and rather critical in terms of the power issues it raises. Nevertheless, as a theologian of culture I am most interested in how the project of decolonizing theology of the study of religion should take place in the context of the North American academy. Of primary importance here is the dissolution of problematic devaluations. For example, what goes by the name of "Christianity" and what goes by the name of "Hinduism" in the academy? As an Indian theologian, my work of constructive theology has often been peripheralized as "contextual" Christian theology in contrast to the theology produced by representatives of the centers of theological power. Or, as my good friend Neelima Shukla-Bhatt often bemoans, her form of Hinduism is often taken to be a subjective and faith-based description of religious practice, whereas, her white, Euro-American Protestant or Christian or Atheist colleagues are able to do "objective" and academic Hinduism. The colonial and neo-colonial context of academic Christian theology and Hinduism cannot avoid persistently interrogating this context.

Recommended Citation

Available at: https://doi.org/10.7825/2164-6279.1405