

‘The Emergence of Christ Groups in India: The case of Karnataka State’

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ABSTRACT

The thesis studies the effect of the western individualistic approach to Christian evangelism in the Indian relational context, especially the emergence of Christ Groups. These grew as the conversion of families began in reaction to the house to house tract distribution which aimed to win individuals. The process was done by the nationals who shared their experiences without threatening the culture. The relational context of India shaped how the Christ Groups received and shared the gospel.

The organisational culture of the Christian agency, World Literature Crusade was transmitted and internalised by its Indian staff, and imposed its aims and objectives on the recipients. But Christ Groups survived under pressure because of the peoples’ involvement and willingness to own the vision.

An open-ended interview was conducted for 200 members of four Christ Groups, a questionnaire was administered, and a case study was made on the Hosadurga Christ Group. A questionnaire was given to WLC and IEHC officials to assess their interest in Christ Groups. The responses are statistically analysed by qualitative and quantitative methods. The evaluation concentrates on the response of the context, and the perception and role of the members about themselves and Christ Groups.

The study locates Christ Groups in relation to other missionary approaches and finds their unique approach of evangelism that allows the cultural response to develop at its own pace contrasts with the approaches of mass movements, of church growth through homogenous units, of inclusiveness, of complete social and cultural change, of a focus on social responsibility, and of social justice. None of the approaches seem mutually contradictory, but together they fill the gaps and widen the concept of evangelism in context.