



To Be Cared For: The Power of Conversion and Foreignness of Belonging in an Indian Slum (The Anthropology of Christianity)

By Nathaniel Roberts

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To Be Cared For offers a unique view into the conceptual and moral world of slum-bound Dalits (“untouchables”) in the South Indian city of Chennai. Focusing on the decision by many women to embrace locally specific forms of Pentecostal Christianity, Nathaniel Roberts challenges dominant anthropological understandings of religion as a matter of culture and identity, as well as Indian nationalist narratives of Christianity as a “foreign” ideology that disrupts local communities. Far from being a divisive force, conversion integrates the slum community—Christians and Hindus alike—by addressing hidden moral fault lines that subtly pit residents against one another in a national context that renders Dalits outsiders in their own land.”

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Editorial Review

Review

"A major contribution to the anthropology of Christianity but also to the wider anthropology of religion as well as gender, class, and postcolonialism."

(*Anthropology Review Database* 2016-05-31)

From the Inside Flap

"*To be Cared For* is a richly layered critique of elite discourses and anxieties about caste and conversion in India through a moving and insightful ethnography of religious practices and morality among the profoundly dispossessed. At once about caste, gender, hunger, injustice, and caring, this beautifully written book carries an analytical heft rarely seen in such grounded ethnographies."

—Raka Ray, Professor of Sociology and South and Southeast Asia Studies, University of California, Berkeley

"This is a remarkable book, supported by painstaking ethnographic research and written with clarity and sensitivity. *To Be Cared For* takes a hugely complex subject and gives us new points of departure. It shows how anthropological approaches to religion, identity, and conversion need to change. It helps the reader rethink the nature of religion, culture, and truth—matters urgent to people facing discrimination, extreme poverty, and acute uncertainty."

—David Mosse, Professor of Anthropology, School of African and Oriental Studies, University of London

"This remarkable ethnography tells a fascinating story with critical skill and compassion. Religion here is how people live, not what official doctrine says. Nathaniel Roberts gives us a complicated picture of moral contradictions and religious insights. This book is essential reading for anthropologists and others interested in the roles of religion in the modern world."

—Talal Asad, Distinguished Professor of Anthropology, the Graduate Center, City University of New York

About the Author

Nathaniel Roberts is Research Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Germany.

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