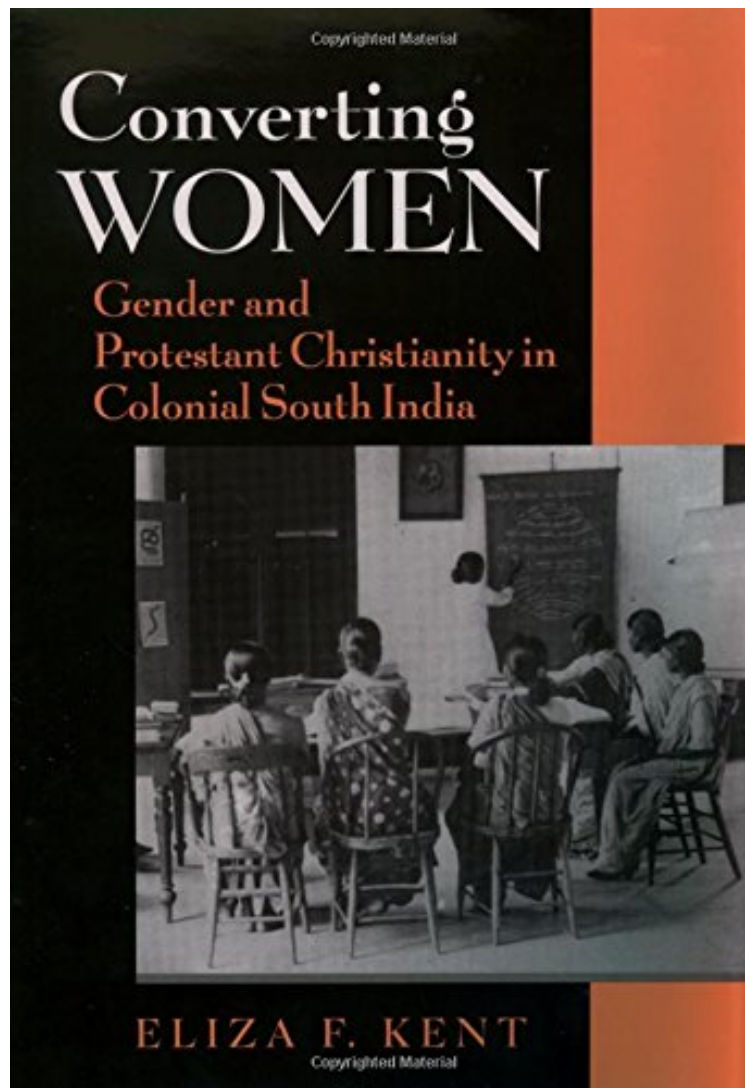


Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India

Eliza F. Kent

*ebooks / Download PDF / *ePub / DOC / audiobook*



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#2692669 in Books Eliza F Kent 2004-04-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 6.30 x 1.40 x 9.30l, 1.40
#File Name: 0195165071336 pages Converting Women Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South
India | File size: 66.Mb

Eliza F. Kent : Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India*:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Women in cultural shift By Stephanie Oxley A bit over-documented for my needs, but thoroughly explains the importance of women setting the pace for cultural shift and caste

elimination.

With the emergence of Hindu nationalism, the conversion of Indians to Christianity has become a volatile issue, erupting in violence against converts and missionaries. At the height of British colonialism, however, conversion was a path to upward mobility for low-castes and untouchables, especially in the Tamil-speaking south of India. In this book, Eliza F. Kent takes a fresh look at these conversions, focusing especially on the experience of women converts and the ways in which conversion transformed gender roles and expectations. Kent argues that the creation of a new, "respectable" community identity was central to the conversion process for the agricultural laborers and artisans who embraced Protestant Christianity under British rule. At the same time, she shows, this new identity was informed as much by elite Sanskrit customs and ideologies as by Western Christian discourse. Stigmatized by the dominant castes for their ritually polluting occupations and relaxed rules governing kinship and marriage, low-caste converts sought to validate their new higher-status identity in part by the reform of gender relations. These reforms affected ideals of femininity and masculinity in the areas of marriage, domesticity, and dress. By the creation of a "discourse of respectability," says Kent, Tamil Christians hoped to counter the cultural justifications for their social, economic, and sexual exploitation at the hands of high-caste landowners and village elites. Kent's focus on the interactions between Western women missionaries and the Indian Christian women not only adds depth to our understanding of colonial and patriarchal power dynamics, but to the intricacies of conversion itself. Posing an important challenge to normative notions of conversion as a privatized, individual moment in time, Kent's study takes into consideration the ways that public behavior, social status, and the transformation of everyday life inform religious conversion.

"...an important addition to the growing corpus on conversion to Christianity in colonial South Asia." --American Historical "An important analysis of the complex motivations for conversion and its ambiguous outcomes for marginalized groups."--Journal of Church and State "...an important addition to the growing corpus on conversion to Christianity in colonial South Asia." --American Historical "An important analysis of the complex motivations for conversion and its ambiguous outcomes for marginalized groups."--Journal of Church and State "Converting Women is a sensitive and understanding analysis of the enabling function that both converting and being converted to Christianity in India provided for women of both India and the West. Kent is able to understand with precision and care the interactive way in which local Christians and extra-local lady missionaries--unmarried but devoted and sometimes larger than life--helped to articulate middle class respectability and the protection of women's sexuality only through marriage. Kent's particular gifts lie in her understanding of the extent to which India operated as an epistemic and ontological site that helped to construct both local Indian Christians and European and American single women missionaries."--Eugene Irschick, Department of History, University of California, Berkeley "Kent deftly examines the twists and turns in the lives of women missionaries and their female converts as they accommodated and selectively appropriated Victorian evangelical theology with Indian and British expectations for female comportment. Kent's engaging portrayal of a complicated mix of cultural and religious expectations affords the reader a fascinating view of the ways mission both hampered and enhanced female authority and autonomy on both sides of the colonial divide. Kent's work adds important depth to our understanding of colonial and gendered power dynamics as well as to the intricacies of conversion itself."--Corinne G. Dempsey, University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point "Converting Women makes a powerful argument for conversion as a public act beyond a change of 'beliefs.'" --History of Religions "This monumental undertaking further brings to public view how ancient, large, variegated, and vibrant a tradition is Christianity in India today." --Church History About the Author Eliza F. Kent is Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Religion at Colgate University.