

United States Naval Academy

Distance and Dialogue:  
The Church Missionary Society and Emerging Hindu Groups in Late  
Colonial India

A paper submitted to the faculty of the History Department in partial  
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## **1. Glossary**

*Advaita*- philosophy that teaches the unity of all things, leaving no place for the individual soul

*Arya*- lit. noble; for this purpose, an Arya is always a member of Swami Dayananda's group the Arya Samaj

*Bhajan*- a devotional song

*Bhakti*- Hindu term for devotion to God

*Deshi*- countryman; Indianness

*Dharma*- used as the closest Hindu term for "religion"

*Dvaita*- dualistic philosophy that teaches that the distinct souls of God and nature remain different from each other through eternity

*Math*- monastery

*Maya*- illusion

*Moksha*- liberation of the soul from reincarnation

*Pap*- impurity, both physical and moral

*Pariksha*- lit. tested; often used with specific reference to proving a god false (ie., Krishna Pariksha, or, directed towards the missionaries, Isa Pariksha, meaning "Jesus tested")

*Samsara*- transmigration of souls

*Samaj*- society

*Sanskrit*- the sacred language of Hinduism

*Shuddi*- a purification rite; Swami Dayananda used this a rite of reconversion

*Vedas*- a large body of Indian scriptures

## 1. Introduction and Historiography

This thesis seeks to explore a few moments of interaction between Christians and Hindus in late colonial India by interrogating what role, if any, they had in the emerging ‘Hindu’ groups of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Ultimately, it seeks to argue that in matters of ‘religion,’<sup>1</sup> missionaries and Hindus often completely missed one another. The lack of religious communication between Christians and Hindus was not necessarily due to language barriers, but due to completely irreconcilable views of themselves, the Godhead, and notions of salvation. In a way, this was a conceptual, almost epistemological barrier. The emerging religious groups of north India were very familiar with the missionaries and their teachings, and they, to a large extent, reflect the Indian exchanges with missionaries. In some instances, it seems that thought they may have had Western "tactics" and methods of organization, but in the end they maintained traditionally “Hindu” concepts and understandings of the nature of God and of salvation.

Modern scholarship has made countless attempts to characterize “Hinduism” as it existed before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Yet difficulties arise, and not without reason. In a land as vast and diverse as India, whatever is true in one region, the opposite is sure to hold in some other corner of the continent. Hinduism was, and remains, monotheistic, polytheistic, deistic, even atheistic, holding startling dichotomies to be true without ever contradicting itself. When encountered from the West, the lack of confessional identity and standardized rituals led many to conclude that “Hinduism” was not a religion, but

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this paper, a ‘religion’ will be defined as a system of beliefs and practices that is based on concepts of the sacred and the profane. The phrase “sacred and profane” is the most useful way to describe ‘religion’ for this paper, but the paper does not engage with the rest of Eliade’s work or categories. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, (Orlando: Harcourt Inc., 1987).

rather a philosophical tradition accommodating a variety of traditions and customs. In response to interactions with the West, especially the overbearing Imperial relationship with the British Empire, new strands of Hinduism emerged, leading to a critical period of identity formation. There are countless characterizations of this exchange. To some, Hinduism only became a religion during the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a nationalistic response to the British Raj and its Christianity. To others, Hinduism had always existed, the *Sanatana* (eternal) *Dharma*,<sup>2</sup> and only morphed with changes in time, place and practitioners, as any religion will. In this sense, Hinduism diverges from more historical religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as its beginnings cannot be traced to a person or event. With such divergent conceptual (and almost epistemic) approaches, the debate is far from closed.

Different attitudes toward this question are directly reflected in the current historiography on the engagements between “Hinduism” and the wider world after the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Robert E. Frykenberg is among those scholars who regard “Hinduism” before the arrival of the British as nothing more than a geographic descriptor, a form of a foreign word for the river Indus,<sup>3</sup> used to identify “anything native to India, whether people, language, custom, or religious tradition.”<sup>4</sup> For Frykenberg, “Hinduism” says more about its geographic identity and bearings than anything necessarily confessional, doctrinal or even customary. He argues it was not a religion at all, since a convert to

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<sup>2</sup> The term “*Sanatana Dharma*” can be translated as “eternal duty.” It is more or less the indigenous term for what binds “Hindus” together. It stems from the notion that the *Vedas* were not written at some point in history but have eternally existed.

<sup>3</sup> The term Hindu is probably derived from the Persian word for Sind, used to describe anyone living in the Indus river valley. Though it was eventually broadened to include the entire subcontinent, there is little to no evidence that it was ever used by ‘Hindus’ to describe themselves. It certainly wasn’t a religious identifier. C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914 Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 342.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Eric Frykenberg, “Christianity in India,” in *Oxford History of the Christian Church*, edited by Henry Chadwick and Owen Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 268.

Christianity or Islam could easily maintain his “Hindu” cultural and customary trappings. For example, it was not uncommon for converts to maintain such customs as “Hindu” dietary laws or seasonal holidays. Similarly, one could not override his inherited “low caste” status and stigma by joining one of the more egalitarian religions.<sup>5</sup> The various religious institutions of India were only “welded together” as a matter of convenience for what Frykenberg calls the “imperial apparatus”<sup>6</sup> of the British crown’s own Hindu empire and Brahman Raj.<sup>7</sup> Frykenberg is not alone in his argument. C.A. Bayly sees Hinduism, along with other religions, as changing dramatically during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He similarly expresses doubt that “a religion existed in this conventional sense at all,”<sup>8</sup> but he sees many simultaneous changes also occurring in the “established” Abrahamic religions, such as missionary Christianity and even realms of the Islamic world under European colonial power. As no religion exists outside of history, he does not use an obvious change over time to attack the legitimacy of Hinduism. Bayly notices commonalities between the huge array of “philosophies, rituals, and techniques for harnessing esoteric power”<sup>9</sup> present in India, but admits that the “Hindu church” was born out of a need for “an accessible tradition and a feeling of historic worth when faced with the humiliation of foreign rule.”<sup>10</sup>

Geoffrey A. Oddie, in a similar vein, argues that the use of the term “Hindu” to describe all those inhabitants of the vast subcontinent sent Europeans on a search for

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<sup>5</sup> Similarly, high-caste Christians did not surrender their higher status. In fact, Frykenberg states that, in India “all Christians tended to identify themselves as much by birth, caste, and community as by church, denomination, or theological outlook.” In Frykenberg’s estimate, “Each Christian community possessed its own hyphenised and hybridized character, its own ‘dual identity’ or ‘dual citizenship’, one on earth and subject to Caesar and the other in heaven and subject to God.” *Ibid.* 263.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 269.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 286.

<sup>8</sup> Bayly, *Birth of the Modern World*, 336.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 342.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 343.

commonalities and, eventually, to the invention of “the Hindoo faith.”<sup>11</sup> To Oddie, the role of the Protestant presence in the formation of Hinduism as a religion is underemphasized in modern scholarship.<sup>12</sup> Oddie locates the motor of change in Hindu conceptions of “Self” largely within the missionary enterprise. Similarly, Brian K. Smith, argues that all religions are the inventions of outsiders; Hinduism only serves, with all its multiplicities and apparent contradictions, to highlight the dangers of categorization.<sup>13</sup> However, Smith remains convinced that those who rally against all categorization in the humanities, particularly with respect to religion, are only harming those precious subjects they seek to protect.<sup>14</sup> Enemies of definition, Smith believes, should understand that naming something does not stifle further discussion,<sup>15</sup> but rather provides what is necessary in order to facilitate useful reflection.<sup>16</sup>

Scholars such as Julius Lipner, however, raise significant conceptual issues in this debate over “Hinduism.” He sees all attempts at categorization as missing the point entirely. “Hinduism” was not a religion invented by the British, nor was it ever a religion. Instead, it was (and remains) a way of life, a way of thinking, a way of looking at the world that was not necessarily religious, but inevitably manifest itself in a religious

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<sup>11</sup> Geoffrey A. Oddie, “Constructing ‘Hinduism’: The Impact of the Protestant Missionary Movement on Hindu Self-Understanding” *Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross-Cultural Communication Since 1500, with Special Reference to Caste, Conversion, and Colonialism*, edited by Robert Eric Frykenberg (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 156.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 155.

<sup>13</sup> Brian K. Smith, “Exorcising the Transcendent: Strategies for Defining Hinduism and Religion” *History of Religions* 27 no. 1 (1987), 34.

<sup>14</sup> Here, he describes the “leery scholars of the humanities” to whom “definition is what lab-coated analysts in the ‘hard’ sciences do, and the objects of humanistic studies are held too precious to subject them to the same fate that natural objects have suffered. . . a cruel pinning of an elusive butterfly.” *Ibid.* 33.

<sup>15</sup> He even provides, as an alternative to the intimidating “definition,” the “working definition” which would allow, even require, more work to be done on the subject and “therefore makes possible the continual reworking of the working definition.” *Ibid.* 34.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 33.

ways.<sup>17</sup> The religious notions of the West did not find counterparts in India because the traditions did not share the same concepts of “religiosity,” namely, faith, creed and notions of salvation. In a seemingly veiled critique of Frykenberg and Oddie, Brian Pennington chastises those who would call Hinduism an imperialist invention, calling such scholarship “faddish”<sup>18</sup> and arguing that it “grants altogether too much power to colonialism... and erases Hindu agency and creativity.”<sup>19</sup> Hinduism was neither a strictly defined religion before the British, nor was it a colonial construction, but rather “the result of continuous historical processes.”<sup>20</sup> A similar conclusion has been drawn by David Lorenzen, who argues that “if Hinduism is a construct or invention,” it is then (much like any other religion or institution) the collaboration of many individuals over the course of a very long time.<sup>21</sup>

The larger British-Indian, and more specifically Christian-Hindu, interaction cannot be understood outside of the imperial context. Of course, the actual relationship between missionary and Empire was largely dependent on the individual. For some, missionary work was a way to “strengthen and establish our dominion in India.”<sup>22</sup> In fact, the organizational capacity of the numerous missionary groups was remarkable and, in many ways, mirrored the colonial bureaucracy emerging by the 1840s. However, recent scholarship has shown that many missionaries did not see themselves as arms of empire. According to Hayden Bellenoit, there was plenty of room for “antagonism

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<sup>17</sup> Julius Lipner, “Hindus: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices” *The Library of Religious Beliefs and Practices*, edited by John Hinnells and Ninian Smart (New York: Routledge, 1994), 1-23.

<sup>18</sup> Brian K. Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented? Britons, Indians, and the Colonial Construction of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 5.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 6.

<sup>21</sup> Lorenzen, David N. “Who Invented Hinduism?” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41 no.4 (1999): 654-655.

<sup>22</sup> *CMS Intelligencer 1869*, 238.

between worldly (empire) and other-worldly (missionary) realms.”<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Andrew Porter has shown that missionary feelings toward Empire ranged from fierce loyalty to an equally fierce resentment.<sup>24</sup> Jeffrey Cox seeks to show the “multiple stories” that comprise what he calls the “master narrative” of the missionary.<sup>25</sup> He sees a world built by Indians and Europeans which is simultaneously “indigenous, foreign and hybrid.”<sup>26</sup> By forcing previously marginalized characters (namely women and Indian Christians) into the limelight, he shows his readers the “touching expressions of sympathy”<sup>27</sup> he reads in firsthand accounts of missionary work. He portrays the individual missionaries as (at times) fiercely opposed to racism and desperately seeking friendship from the indigenous peoples they encountered. However, it must be noted that whatever the self-image of the individual missionary, he arrived on the scene with the strength of the British Empire behind him and whatever his goal, he remained an effective tool of empire.<sup>28</sup>

The debate surrounding the origins of “Hinduism” (especially as a reaction to Empire) remains vibrant, inspiring large amounts literature, yet there is ample room for further exploration.<sup>29</sup> For instance, though there is a consensus that the age of the British

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<sup>23</sup> Bellenoit, *Missionary Education and Empire in Late Colonial India*, 56.

<sup>24</sup> Some were even entirely indifferent. Many saw the Empire’s holdings as Divine Providence giving them access to “heathen” souls. Clearly, their first priority was not the Empire, since many of them set sail with dreams of converting the entire world, and only using British holdings as a bridge to other lands. They had “no ultimate intention of confining activity to colonial territory.” Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester; Manchester University Press, 2004), 43, 64, 323 and 324.

<sup>25</sup> Jeffrey Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 15.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 16.

<sup>28</sup> Porter, *Religion versus Empire?*, 316.

<sup>29</sup> Lipner, for instance, begins his book called “Hindus” by stating: ‘The ‘books-on-Hinduism’ industry is as busy as ever, so that in an apparently saturated market, we must ask: is there room for another?’ He concludes that there is. In fact, there is room “in theory for an endless stream of books.” A “major cultural phenomenon” that has produced individuals who contributed in the realms of religion, philosophy, science,

Raj was undoubtedly a time of identity formation for Hindus, further study of the straining “social forces” hidden beneath missionary interactions is required.<sup>30</sup> Many are quick to note the superficial similarities between emerging Hindu groups and Protestant British missionaries with respect to their publications, rites of conversion and worship, and tactics of proselytization. But questions of genuine “religious” dialogue are largely ignored or glossed over as superficial shouting matches within an increasingly demographically-charged<sup>31</sup> late colonial Indian context. This paper is not another structural side-by-side of evangelical Anglicanism and neo-Hinduism. Rather, it is a characterization of their interactions which seeks to understand the nature of religious dialogue and discover if communication between the people of these strikingly different cultures occurred, let alone was even possible. In many instances, this paper will show that such exchanges were not possible, that certain fundamental concerns of one group simply did not trouble the other in the least. This is especially true with respect to differing attitudes towards sin, redemption, and the nature of (as well as the relationship between) man and the Godhead. However, though there were so many barriers to real communication, there were a few instances in which there was a moment of “dialogue.”

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the fine arts, and physical, technical and literary skill naturally warrants further and deeper exploration. Lipner, *Hindus*, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Frykenberg makes such a case, stating: “Heretofore, because perhaps too much emphasis has been placed upon the roles of missionaries and rulers and perhaps too little attention has been given to the indigenous agency, the impact of conversion itself and of reactions to conversion (or to counter-conversion), and indigenous movements in opposition to each other, has not received the fuller explication and exploration that such events deserved. The fact that more is known about missionary protests and about government policy thereon should not blind us to the possibility that all too much of what really happened lies hidden from the gaze of historians. Social forces straining against each other in silence, due to our ignorance, were no less (or more) implacable for hitherto lying beyond our gaze.” Frykenberg, *Christianity in India*, 266.

<sup>31</sup> Especially after the first all-India census in 1871, demographics were an important way to measure “whether or not a religion was succeeding or failing.” Kenneth W. Jones, “Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India” in *The New Cambridge History of India*, ed. Gordon Johnson, part III vol. I. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 219.

This paper focuses specifically on the interactions between missionaries of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in North India and leaders of the Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna Math and Mission between 1870 and 1920. It employs printed primary sources, written by Samaj activists such as Lala Lajpat Rai and Swami Vivekananda, as well as CMS annual letters and intelligencers. Since these two groups were so divergent in their means and ends, such an approach should add great color to our understanding of the interactions between missionaries and “Hinduism.” Indians were, of course, somewhat bound by the parameters of debate set by the British missionaries, but they were certainly not just passively reacting to oppression and Empire. The post-Mutiny period of the Raj should no longer be dismissed as entirely reactionary.<sup>32</sup> In a way, this paper seeks to beat the boundaries of South Asian historiography by examining Anglican missionaries in India not just through the prism of empire or Church history, but as seeing them as active social agents in a rapidly changing late 19<sup>th</sup> century Indian society.

Religious movements in British India are often placed in “the familiar narratives of both reform and revival,”<sup>33</sup> in which those who seemed to have primarily advocated social consciousness were considered reformers, while those who advocated a return to “Hindu” religious feeling were revivalists. Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal argue that those terms are not particularly useful, since the ideas of social reform and religious revival are not necessarily opposed; and there does not necessarily need to be any contradiction between social consciousness and religious sentiment, or, as they put it, “the rational and the national.” Especially in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was plenty of

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<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.* 8.

<sup>33</sup> Sumit Sarkar, “Indian Nationalism and the Politics of Hindutva” *Making India Hindu: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India*, edited by David Ludden (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 280.

“interplay and overlap” between ideas of “reform and revival.”<sup>34</sup> Vasudha Dalmia argues that these terms had never been particularly useful, since the “traditional/modern polarity” was only a self-representation of those who wished to portray themselves as standing firm against outside pressure. In reality, she argued, the documents of the period show “intense interaction with missionaries, orientalist and western ideas” and “incessant change and exchange”<sup>35</sup> between the groups themselves. In the Arya Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission, for example, there were many striking similarities. Both accepted the Vedas as absolute truth, both promoted social “reform” and both preached the superiority of Hinduism. However, the Arya Samaj, for its intolerance and relative geographic isolation, is usually written off as a ‘reaction’ to colonial encroachment on Indian religious tradition. The Ramakrishna Mission on the other hand, is usually remembered as a progressive movement towards global tolerance. This paper will show that those categories and generalizations are in need of closer examination and in fact do not stand up to a close examination of the historical evidence. It seeks to examine the interaction with missionaries and decide if there is any real communication, or if they just miss each other entirely. It examines how these wider interactions manifest themselves specifically in the Arya Samaj and the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

## **2. Characterizing the CMS-Indian Interaction**

In order to understand the conversation between missionaries and Indians, it is first necessary to understand the missionary views of God, religion, sin, and salvation.

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<sup>34</sup> Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, and Political Economy* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 89-90.

<sup>35</sup> Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Tradition: Bharatendu Harisachandra and Nineteenth-century Banaras* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5.

Even a superficial glance at the religious terrain of England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century reveals that Hindus hardly had a monopoly on religious multiplicity, nor were they the only ones redefining their spiritual identity as a result of empire and interactions with the larger world.<sup>36</sup> Within the Anglican community itself there were seemingly irreconcilable disputes over ritual, rite and the role of “church” in the relationship between God and man. Jeffrey Cox, for example, criticizes recent scholarship for painting the division in Victorian England as simple a struggle between Protestants and Roman Catholics. He argues instead that the “broad social division between church and chapel” was the central conflict in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>37</sup> While it was possible to live an entire lifetime in Victorian England without meeting a Roman Catholic (as they were, in the 1851 census, only 2-3% of the population), Nonconformist chapels and meeting-houses were an “explicit challenge” in “brick and mortar” to the established Church of England.<sup>38</sup> Other scholars, such as Brian Pennington, see the fear of the “Catholic other” as weighing heavily on the British Protestant mind, calling anti-Catholicism an

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<sup>36</sup> Andrew Porter gives this period of “defining and redefining” as 1880-1914. Andrew Porter, “Introduction” *The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions, 1880-1914*, edited by Andrew Porter, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 1. But the relationship between Church, churches and State had been in flux for most of the nineteenth century. Frances Knight defines the period from 1800-1870 as a “transformation more rapid, dramatic and enduring” than any since the Reformation itself. Francis Knight, *The Nineteenth-Century Church and English Society*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1. Hugh McLeod argues that 1860 is an important date in British Protestant identity formation. The period before 1860, according to McLeod was defined by an “uncompromising anti-Catholicism,” whereas the period between 1860 and World War I a new national identity was forming, “sometimes in conjunction with, and sometimes in tension with” older versions of Protestantism. Hugh McLeod, “Protestantism and British National Identity, 1815-1945” *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia* edited by Peter Van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 44.

<sup>37</sup> Jeffrey Cox, “Were Victorian Nonconformists the Worst Imperialists of All?” *Victorian Studies* 46 no. 2 (2004), 243.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 244.

“epidemic” in Victorian England.<sup>39</sup> Both of these accounts are true, but in different spheres.

On the home-front, there was impassioned debate among Protestants of all varieties. Yet in the mission field, differences seemed to fade.<sup>40</sup> They feared disputing “about points ecclesiastical” lest the “heathen” question if they were “really of the same faith” and, if they were, why they “war amongst themselves.”<sup>41</sup> Conversely, Rome posed a relatively minor threat in England, but in the mission field, Roman Catholicism was seen as another form of “paganism.”<sup>42</sup> The struggle with the “Romanists” for the souls of Indians was often described by missionaries in very militaristic terms, clearly pitting one side against the other. For example, one missionary wrote of the “Romanist attack” after which he was glad to find “the priests had failed to do us any serious harm.”<sup>43</sup> Often,

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<sup>39</sup> According to Pennington, even debates in Parliament sometimes stopped to “air ancient prejudices.” He quotes Bishop Lloyd of Oxford as saying (to a Member of Parliament) that “the Catholic question was ‘mixed up with everything we eat or drink or say or think.’” Catholics were dangerous in their idolatry, superstition, priestly tyranny and, worst of all, their allegiance to the Pope before the British State. Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*, 67-68. D.W. Bebbington takes this notion a few steps further and describes the ambitions of the British Empire in terms of religious motives. For example, he thinks that the French occupation of Tahiti (which led to the suppression of LMS, the London Missionary Society) prompted the British to annex New Hebrides (1885) and New Guinea (1886), since “acquisition of territory” was “seen as a preemptive strike against a power that would erect barriers to world evangelization.” D.W. Bebbington, “Atonement, Sin and Empire, 1880-1914” *The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions, 1880-1914*, edited by Andrew Porter (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 27-28. Of course, this view is probably a bit too simplistic, as the Empire most likely had ambitions besides the conversion of the world.

<sup>40</sup> Bellenoit, *Missionary Education and Empire*, 9.

<sup>41</sup> *CMS Intelligencer* 1971, 66.

<sup>42</sup> According to D.W. Bebbington, the Roman Church was perceived not as “a slightly mistaken variant of the Christian faith” but as a “cunning imposture that carried souls to destruction.” Along the same lines, he notes that “evangelicals were conscious of a rivalry for converts with Islam, but their minds were far more haunted by the specter of Roman Catholicism.” Bebbington, “Atonement, Sin, and Empire,” 21, 27. In the same vein, Pennington notes that the Protestant missionaries often saw “Roman and Indian idolatry” as one in the same. Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*, 68.

<sup>43</sup> BUL, Annual Letters, 1888, p. 156. In fact, these descriptions of the attacks and challenges of Rome and priests “doing harm” to the efforts of Christianity were part of a larger pattern of military terms in missionary writing. For example, Rev. Lewis wrote, “Surely the Church at home can hardly be said to have begun its warfare against Hinduism and Mohammedanism yet.” BUL, Rev. H. Lewis, Annual Letters, 1888, p. 147. Another missionary described the group he traveled with as “a body for aggressive warfare” comprised of himself, a “pastor, a Christian pundit and a reader.” BUL, Rev. A. E. Bowlby, Annual Letters, 1894, p.87. Yet another missionary described the Hindu home and extended family as “a scheme of

Catholicism was seen as suspiciously similar to the “heathen” practices. Rev Price, writing home in 1895 from Marpha, said that as far as he could tell, the only difference between the two were that one had a “better-dressed idol” and where one used lamps, the other used candles.<sup>44</sup>

The religious “conflicts” that surfaced in England were often nuanced, doctrinally-driven disputes, further complicated by the fact that Anglicanism proudly maintained a character quite unlike any other Protestant church.<sup>45</sup> Increasingly, scholarship is recognizing the role that the prism of imperialism played in these debates.<sup>46</sup> However, scholars have long recognized that many times, at the core of these disagreements was the role of “church” in man’s relationship with God. Though private prayer, study and devotion had been important aspects of British Christian life from the 17<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>47</sup> the Evangelical Awakening put an increased emphasis on the importance of personal responsibility in matters of salvation.<sup>48</sup> Even to the most ritualistic, the sacraments were seen as helpful “aids” to a more intimate relationship with God. To those of a more low-church variety, it was wrong and even “weak” to seek outside help;

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fortification” which “defends” from “the arms of Christian assault” while “each outer line of circumvallation is commanded by its interior defense.” *CMS Intelligencer 1892*, 813.

<sup>44</sup> BUL, Rev. E. D. Price, Annual Letters, 1898, p. 163.

<sup>45</sup> Owen Chadwick gives a succinct history of the Church of England’s distinctive character that makes it impossible to generalize alongside the various forms of Protestantism in the rest of the European continent. Owen Chadwick, *The Mind of the Oxford Movement*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), 1-30. Further complicating the issue, is the constant flux in historians’ (and the public’s) feelings towards missionaries, as Standish Meacham points out. “Evangelicals and Evangelicalism,” he writes, “seem unable to remain for long either in or out of favor.” Standish Meacham, “The Evangelical Inheritance” *The Journal of British Studies* 3 no.1 (1963), 88.

<sup>46</sup> Porter, “Introduction” *Imperial Horizons*, 2-3.

<sup>47</sup> Andrew Cambers and Michelle Wolfe, “Reading, Family Religion, and Evangelical Identity in Late Stuart England” *The Historical Journal* 47 no. 4 (2004): 875-896.

<sup>48</sup> Catherine Hall calls this a “re-emergence of vital, serious or real Christianity” She writes that it was both nonconformists and Anglicans who believed in the centrality of the individual and a personal conversion experience. Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subject: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 86.

the salvific relationship should be sought entirely “from within.”<sup>49</sup> Yet, on both sides of this debate, there was agreement on the importance of the individual experience of religion, either through the numinous, increasingly mystical sacraments,<sup>50</sup> or through private prayer.

However, it should be noted that many who sparked controversies were not doing so in an attempt to break away, but rather in an attempt to reinvigorate a Church that already existed.<sup>51</sup> The ultimate end for all was the eventual unity of Christianity.<sup>52</sup> In the *CMS Intelligencer* of 1910, one missionary wrote that, though the term “classification” carried positive connotations of order, it was actually a tool of the “great Divider,” as it implied comparison and hindered a realization of the Apostle Paul’s teaching that “there can be no male or female; for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus.”<sup>53</sup> It seems that the desire for unity took hold of all those affiliated with the Church of England. Even an American Episcopalian, quoted the *Intelligencer* of 1909, predicted that for the 20<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Meacham portrays this struggle in terms of generations. For example, the first generation of “Clapham Saints” believed that it was the responsibility of the individual to pray earnestly for his own salvation and had a genuine disdain for the liturgy. The second generation, however, were not convinced. They were tormented by their inability to experience the deep, personal assurance their fathers had found and were open to receiving help from the sacraments. Similarly, Samuel Wilberforce, though son of “the most illustrious of saints,” was happy to “rely” on the sacraments and wrote that “sharing in the ‘Body and Blood of the Lord’ strengthened and refreshed the soul of the partaker.” However, it must be noted that in both generations, these men, whether decidedly “Evangelical” or with Roman tendencies, wanted to “unite dissenters and High Churchmen” and invigorate either the High Church with a sense of personal responsibility or give the Evangelicals back the powerful, and helpful, sacraments. Meacham, “The Evangelical Inheritance,” 94-99.

<sup>50</sup> Chadwick sees this as view of the sacraments, rather than any doctrinal issues, as the primary difference between those of the Oxford Movement and the High Churchmen of the previous generation. Chadwick, *The Mind of the Oxford Movement* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960).

<sup>51</sup> In fact, these movements in Christianity towards a personal experience of religion are all, according to Owen Chadwick, part of a larger Christian tradition of personal religion. Christianity had always taught “religion of the heart” and “confessed from its founder that religion of the heart transcended due celebration of rites.” Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind*, 23.

<sup>52</sup> Those with a more individual view of salvation envisioned an Established Church with increased emphasis on personal prayer. Those who found comfort in the sacraments wanted their Low Church brethren to realize the great “help” they had found. Meacham, “The Evangelical Inheritance,” 94-99.

<sup>53</sup> *CMS Intelligencer* 1910, 715.

century, the second “chief concern” of the world will be the “unification of the Christian Church,” second only to the “international arbitration.”<sup>54</sup>

The Church Missionary Society (CMS), which was highly active in the imperial mission field, especially in India, was born out of this desire for unity. It was at once decidedly evangelical<sup>55</sup> and a part of the Church of England.<sup>56</sup> The CMS served, in a way, as an outlet for those with low-church tendencies who wanted to remain loyal to the Church of England. It was established in 1799 by a group of sixteen evangelical clergymen and nine laymen in order “to propagat[e] the knowledge of the Gospel among the Heathen.”<sup>57</sup> Of course, one cannot doubt the sincerity of the religious and ecclesiastical aims of many members, yet there were undoubtedly a host of other factors at work. Nothing at the turn of the century could be viewed outside of the prism of Empire; and missionary Christianity was no exception.<sup>58</sup> However unwillingly, missionaries were thrust into the colonial milieu. Predictably, there was no one “missionary” view of Empire. Some saw Christianity in India as a way to secure the claims of the empire, calling “the temples of Christian worship” the “bulwarks of a nation.”<sup>59</sup> To some, British conquest was a result of God’s Providence, opening doors for

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<sup>54</sup> *CMS Intelligencer* 1909, 439.

<sup>55</sup> It also, to some, seemed a way for “evangelicals” to claim a success for England and, if they failed, “the early saying, ‘Must be kept in Evangelical hands’ would be thrown in its face with derision.” *CMS Intelligencer* 1892, 739.

<sup>56</sup> In 1869, the *Intelligencer* described the Society “as the handmaid of the Church of England.” *CMS Intelligencer* 1869, 77.

<sup>57</sup> Kevin Ward, “Introduction” in *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity 1799-1999*, edited by Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William C. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 1.

<sup>58</sup> “Of the ubiquity of imperial culture in late Victorian Britain there can no longer be any doubt.” Steven Maughan, “Imperial Christianity? Bishop Montgomery and the Foreign Missions of the Church of England, 1895-1915” *The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions, 1880-1914*, edited by Andrew Porter (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003). 33.

<sup>59</sup> *CMS Review* 1898, 814.

the eventual “emancipation, enlightenment, and salvation” of the world.<sup>60</sup> To them, God’s plan for the salvation of all mankind involved Christianity being embraced first by the Jew, then by the larger Roman Empire and then by the largest of all, the British Empire.<sup>61</sup> They saw those without Christ like a man asleep as his house burns down; and themselves as the neighbors with a moral obligation to “rouse him.”<sup>62</sup> It was their responsibility to give to the Indians “a religion which would lift them up to a level with European nations.”<sup>63</sup> One missionary, Miss Forbes, wrote of an Indian who, hearing the Gospel message asked her, “Have you only just heard this news and come to tell us?” She asked her fellow British Christians how they could face such a question.<sup>64</sup> To those who believed in the salvific life and death of Jesus, it was their moral obligation to share what news they had been blessed with, especially in lands that were part of their own Empire. Others were more attuned to the violence of this Empire and saw the gift of Christ (the only answer to the problems of this world)<sup>65</sup> as the best way to atone for abuses.<sup>66</sup> Some missionaries seem almost indifferent to the empire, claiming that they had only come to India to engage with those “whose knowledge of English literature and science is supposed to have instilled into them higher and nobler principles for thought.”<sup>67</sup> Whatever the perceived relationship to the Empire, missionaries never unequivocally saw the world in terms of East and West, or Indian and English; they saw a

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<sup>60</sup> Some ignored the violence of the Empire entirely, stating that “because only eight of the sixty-three colonies had come by conquest, their population had clearly been ‘committed to us by the Providence of God.’” A French critic of the British was once quoted as accusing the English of being likely to “put a bullet through a black man, pick him up and dress his wounds, and affectionately exclaim, ‘This is a providential opening for the Gospel!’” Bebbington, “Atonement, Sin, and Empire,” 19, 18.

<sup>61</sup> *CMS Intelligencer* 1869, 97.

<sup>62</sup> BUL, Rev. A. J. Birkett, Annual Letters, 1892, p. 139.

<sup>63</sup> BUL Rev. Carmichael, Annual Letters, 1890, p. 172.

<sup>64</sup> BUL, Miss H. M. Forbes, Annual Letters, 1900, p. 428.

<sup>65</sup> *CMS Intelligencer* 1871, 65.

<sup>66</sup> Bebbington, “Atonement, Sin, and Empire,” 19.

<sup>67</sup> BUL, S. John, 1886, p. 87.

world divided by the harshest lines of all: saved and damned. And they were the elect of God, out to “save” the world.

This missionary zeal was born in an English Awakening of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries<sup>68</sup> and the first mission fields were in English industrial cities,<sup>69</sup> but it is one of the “enduring myths of our time” that before the nineteenth century the British were completely ignorant of other lands.<sup>70</sup> As the Jewel in the Crown of the British Empire, India was definitely known throughout the “home-front.”<sup>71</sup> India was one of the Society’s first and most important territories. After years of campaigning for access, Missionaries were first allowed into the East India Company’s territories in 1813.<sup>72</sup> Missionaries paid special attention to north India, with its holy city of Benares and it being the heartland of Hinduism, as the Society’s leadership believed the region to be

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<sup>68</sup> Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*, 23-41.

<sup>69</sup> And many missionaries, before setting sail, would have even worked as missionaries in cities such as London, Leeds and Birmingham. Bellenoit, *Missionary Education and Empire in Late Colonial India*, 64.

<sup>70</sup> Pennington quotes Antoinette Burton as pointing out “that the myth of ‘Britain’s insularity’ from its colonial possessions has been ‘one of the most enduring fictions’ of the colonial and imperial chapters of British history and that British domestic life ‘sponsored a variety of possibilities for colonial encounters of the most casual and the most spectacular kind.’” He goes on to quote the *London Quarterly Review* as observing that “many a small tradesman or rustic know more of African or Polynesian life than London journalists.” *Ibid.* 26.

<sup>71</sup> This is not to say that the British had any real understanding of the history, politics or culture of India, but they had heard romantic visions of the East, read descriptions from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century travelers, or, at the very least, seen Indian textiles. As Victorian social writers exposed the abject poverty of the slums, the Indian “heathen” of the British imagination became increasingly depraved. Notions of people in far-off lands were very much colored by what the British found at home among their own uneducated, un-Christianized masses. Increasingly throughout the nineteenth century, the distinction between the impoverished in England and in India was blurred. Frykenberg, for example, offers, “if a man’s primal condition, with attendant social evils, could be so bad in Britain, how could it be much different in the world beyond.” Frykenberg, *Christianity in India*, 287.

<sup>72</sup> Until 1813, the only clergy allowed to travel to India with the British East India Company were those who would be ministering exclusively to the English. The British in India were far too dependent upon Hindus in the administration (not to mention outnumbered) to risk offending the population. The British went to such lengths to maintain relationships that the period before 1813 is sometimes referred to as the “Hindu Raj.” Frykenberg, *Christianity in India*, 270-283. However, even shortly after 1813, not all “missionaries” were out to preach the “Empire of Christ.” This is especially true in Bengal, where the first Anglican missionaries arrived. They worked on projects involving schools, barracks, hospitals and prisons, and were not at all interested in “interfering with any species of superstition.” In fact, Cox portrays them as being a bit embarrassed at the evangelical zeal of such enthusiastic Baptists as William Carey. Cox, *Were Victorian Nonconformists the Worst Imperialists of All?*, 249.

critical in that, “well occupied,” it would “become the basis of operations extending beyond the frontiers of India into the uplands of Asia.”<sup>73</sup> As missionaries were increasingly exposed to exotic cultures and religions, “Hinduism” stood out obviously as among the most strikingly different.<sup>74</sup>

Missionary views of themselves, the Church, salvation, “Hinduism,” and India changed with time, place and the experiences of the individual missionary. But for all these differences, missionaries were surprisingly successful in presenting the Indian population with a united front. In the “brooding darkness of heathenism,” it seemed, as Baumann notes, a necessity to “present a united front in our labors to win the heathen to Christ.”<sup>75</sup> They all arrived on scene with a similar, energetic, Bible-centered message of personal salvation. When they did debate the necessity of baptism or the issue of who could serve communion, they were not just making for stimulating or scholarly conversation. They were seeking truth in order that they might never lead a Christian (or potential one) astray. The Arya Samajist, Lala Lajpat Rai, amongst others, would later come to see the problems in calling Christians a people of one creed,<sup>76</sup> but when they first arrived in India they suppressed the inclination to debate and presented only the common denominator of their faiths.<sup>77</sup> For example, CMS missionaries actually protested the “Ritualism” of a more high-church Anglican Cathedral in the North-West Provinces, and were successful, at least, to the point that in public functions, those “illegal vestments”

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<sup>73</sup> *CMS Intelligencer* 1870, 11.

<sup>74</sup> Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*, 64-65.

<sup>75</sup> BUL, Annual Letters, Baumann, 1893, p. 407.

<sup>76</sup> Lala Lajpat Rai, *A History of the Arya Samaj* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1992), 87.

<sup>77</sup> They further justified the need to present only a single message by portraying the Indian as someone not capable of understanding any theological nuance. Especially the “village people” who were just “babes in Christ” who could only digest “the very simplest food.” BUL, Miss V. C. Saunders, Annual Letters, 1905, p. 507.

were ordered not to be worn.<sup>78</sup> It was of great importance to them that they be able to boil their faith down to the simplest creed. Some of the proposed creed revisions were a single sentence (“I believe in God, through Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord and Savior.”) One that was unanimously agreed upon in 1909 by a conference of Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Methodists and CMS Anglicans, highlighted the importance of the Scripture, the assumed sinful nature of man and atoning love of Jesus.<sup>79</sup>

It is important to note that missionaries did not make the journey and sacrifices of missionary life only to better the Empire or the Anglican Church. They often set sail with their own spiritual condition in mind. To many, India was seen as a sort of “refuge” for Christians and the religiously-minded. However impassioned the previously discussed ecclesiastical debates, issues of faith were far from the most important concerns weighing on these English minds. Those frustrated by the lack of piety at home, or the distractions from their relationship with God, often sought mission work abroad, where priorities, they were told, had “a natural tendency to take their right place,” and all emphasis would be “laid upon the Faith.”<sup>80</sup> From the accounts of the missionaries already in India, Christians in England largely saw the mission field as far more than just a place to instruct possible future Christians; it would have been an escape from the emergent secular world altogether. This ‘romanticized’ view of India, unlike waves of

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<sup>78</sup> BUL, Rev. H.M.M. Hackett, Annual Letters, 1889, p. 258.

<sup>79</sup> “The Church acknowledges and receives the Word of God delivered in the Old and New Testaments as its supreme standard of faith and life. It accepts and holds as the central message of Scripture the evangel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Who loved us and gave Himself for us; in Whom God is revealed as the righteous and loving Father, Who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance; through Whom God has established His Kingdom upon earth; and by Whom the Holy Spirit trains men to faith and penitence, inspires them to a life of service and brings them ever into deeper harmony with God’s holy will.” *CMS Intelligencer* 1901, 439.

<sup>80</sup> *CMS Intelligencer* 1913, p. 270.

academic orientalism preceding it, was almost entirely spiritual. Missionary characterizations of India were not just affected by the waves of Indo-phobia and Indomania sweeping the European continent. They were equally personal rejections of secularization and modernity. In an increasingly urbanized, machine-run world, the missionaries took pride in the challenges of their mission and the dangers of the environment, and bragged of being “kept constantly” at this challenging task.<sup>81</sup> They took their over-tasking as a sign of “happy work,” since “the greater need of the human heart is to feel wanted... and this joy one has in India.”<sup>82</sup> This was appealing to the “Victorian minds troubled about purpose” that Owen Chadwick has famously described.<sup>83</sup>

Similarly, missionaries also saw India as a refuge from modern scrutiny of religion. There are countless stories, poignantly written, of the missionary stepping back to adore “simple” Hindu friends for their ability to cling, without doubt and reservation, to the “Divine love.” Rev. Pargiter wrote that he was always happy to get out of the classrooms and into the villages where he could “come into contact with the simple-minded people and tell them of Jesus and His love.”<sup>84</sup> Like the missionaries, many of the Hindus they met did not look for natural or scientific causes of events, such as famines or outbreaks of disease, but attributed these things directly to the work of the gods. For instance, some attributed their village being spared from a plague to them not paying homage to a certain god, or leaving “off Hindu worship because it had brought many

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<sup>81</sup> BUL, Rev. H.M.M. Hackett, Annual Letters, 1889, p. 258.

<sup>82</sup> BUL, Rev. H. B. Durrant, Annual Letters, 1899, p. 601.

<sup>83</sup> Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind*, 182.

<sup>84</sup> BUL, Rev. Pargiter, Annual Letters, 1890, p. 157.

evils upon them.”<sup>85</sup> The missionaries were distraught as the 20<sup>th</sup> century wore on and Indians began to use European ideas to refute matters of faith. Afraid that Hindus were “ready to borrow all their weapons for attacking Christianity from Europe,”<sup>86</sup> they went so far as to discourage spreading any European philosophy that a Hindu might “forge” into a “weapon” with which to “assail the faith.”<sup>87</sup> The Indians had enough ways to refute the Gospel and certainly did not need outside help, especially from missionaries themselves.

Of course, when they arrived on the Indian scene, many missionaries were faced with a deep sense of disappointment. In some ways, they had not escaped at all. Many had just come from school, only to spend two years in an intense language study. The missionaries were required to have a certain level of proficiency with Indian languages. Their dedication to the study of languages was further proof that they were trying to know the “native” mind in order to be able to really engage him in conversation. The first assignment for any missionary was almost exclusively to learn the languages of the land. They would begin with Urdu and after passing their exams they would move on to Hindi. It was their main focus, to the point that one missionary wrote home that the entire first year abroad could be summed up in “two words: language study.” And this “language study” never really ceased so long as one remained a missionary.”<sup>88</sup> In one instance, a missionary described the first year in a foreign country as “a disappointing

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<sup>85</sup> BUL, Rev. H. D. Williamson, Annual Letters, 1887, p. 142-143.

<sup>86</sup> *CMS Intelligencer 1909*, p. 644.

<sup>87</sup> *CMS Intelligencer 1909*, p. 644.

<sup>88</sup> BUL, Mr. H. Blackwood, Annual Letters, 1898, p. 597.

one.” He was expecting “miracles of Divine grace” and “standards of Christian life higher than those in the home land,” but was soon disappointed.<sup>89</sup>

Perhaps the most disillusionment was felt, specifically, with respect to baptism. For a host of reasons, baptisms in North India were few and far between and, in the words of one missionary, their attempts at the conversion of India were comparable to “pouring water into the Ganges.”<sup>90</sup> The barriers were built up from both sides. On the Indian side, it was extremely difficult for a Hindu to commit to baptism. For many of these missionaries, the act of baptism had no inherent spiritual value. It was simply a public declaration of faith. And this public declaration, “the supreme step” in the words of one missionary,<sup>91</sup> was the step Hindus were not always willing to take, for a number of reasons. Most importantly, if a Hindu were to convert, he would be giving up his caste, his family, his occupation, and his place in the world.<sup>92</sup> And, as Rev. W.E.S. Holland pointed out to his coreligionists, “how many of us would be outwardly Christian, did it mean the severing of all intercourse with those we love?”<sup>93</sup> One Hindu confided in missionary Mr. J. McIntosh that though his heart was “filled with confusion,” he would not be baptized until both of his parents died, as he was afraid of “giving trouble and pain to his aged father and mother.”<sup>94</sup> For the children in the mission schools, their parents

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<sup>89</sup> “He comes to the country with preconceived notions of the people, most of which notions have to be got rid of, as he looks on the people as they are. There is no comparison between the English Christian and the Native Christian in India. The former is educated from earliest years to believe in, and pray to, and love the God of Love, and the surrounding of the home are all moulded from Christianity. Here in India it is just the reverse. Teaching is urgently needed, and the opportunities for getting such teaching are very few.” BUL, Rev. E. A. Hensley, Annual Letters 1894-1895, p. 74.

<sup>90</sup> BUL, Rev. A. Butterworth, Annual Letters, 1900, p. 417.

<sup>91</sup> BUL, Rev. H. W. V. Birney, Annual Letters, 1898, 364.

<sup>92</sup> BUL, Mr. R. Baker, Annual Letters, 1894, p. 76.

<sup>93</sup> BUL, Rev. W. E. S. Holland, Annual Letters, 1911, p. 141.

<sup>94</sup> BUL, Mr. J. McIntosh, Annual Letters, 1900, p. 433.

would often prevent them from baptism.<sup>95</sup> In one case, an adult who desired baptism was actually “carried off” by members of his family.<sup>96</sup> Interestingly, some adults confessed a complete faith in Jesus, but still begged not to be baptized. In their begging, they often brought up a point the missionaries themselves had been wrestling with: if they were already saved by faith in Jesus, was the rite of baptism even necessary?<sup>97</sup> One Indian Christian working for the CMS explained this problem to his English missionary friends, explaining that one of the real reasons they were so hesitant was a lack of knowledge. They had no idea what the rite could involve and, since the English did so many other “impure” things, there was a risk of pollution.<sup>98</sup> As one Indian succinctly put it, “You eat any filth!”<sup>99</sup>

Adding to the difficulty was the fact that CMS missionaries were very particular about who *they* decided was fit to be baptized. This made baptisms even more infrequent. It seems CMS missionaries never got particularly upset about other varieties of Protestants proselytizing in their area, but they were quick to anger when a group, such as the American Methodists,<sup>100</sup> would baptize en masse, especially illiterate lower-caste people who knew nothing of Christianity. In one case, CMS missionaries took in a man

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<sup>95</sup> “They said, in answer to a question regarding their belief in the tenets of Christianity, ‘Sir, we do believe that Christianity is true, but what can we boys do, dependent upon our parents?’” BUL, Norman, Annual Letters, 1887, p. 360.

<sup>96</sup> One old Hindu man who would pray every night “O Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me, and forgive me all my sins” and would “repeat this at his home day and night” “He wished to be baptized, but before that could be his people carried him to the Ganges, perhaps they hastened his death there.” BUL, Rev. J. Brown, Annual Letters, 1887, p. 207.

<sup>97</sup> BUL, Mr. J. McIntosh, Annual Letters, 1899, p. 548. Similarly, Rev. Pemberton calls this “a solemn question” than “involved a great deal.” BUL, Rev. J. F. Pemberton, Annual Letters, 1902, p. 326.

<sup>98</sup> The missionaries, in preaching the confessional part of their faith, failed to teach anything of “the devotional parts” of the creed. BUL, Rev. J. Qalandar, Annual Letters, 1902, p. 280. Mrs. Rail gave us one example of such a case. In her 1903 letter, she wrote that a little girl had refused baptism because she had been led to believe that the water used by the missionaries was polluted. BUL, Mrs. E. Rail, Annual Letters, 1903, 426.

<sup>99</sup> BUL, Rev. E. P. Herbert, Annual Letters, 1897, p. 373.

<sup>100</sup> BUL, Rev. Dr. W. Hooper, Annual Letters, 1894, p. 89.

who had been baptized by American Methodists and wrote that, in instructing this man, they had to start from the very elementary concepts of the faith.<sup>101</sup> One missionary claimed that even though some groups will baptize many and proclaim the fact in their newspapers, “as a rule, they know little, often nothing, of Christians or Christianity,” and show no loyalty to the missionaries, “making them useless, listless, hangers-on, called ‘rice Christians.’”<sup>102</sup> Society missionaries still believed that it would be natural for Christianity to appeal to depressed classes and saw them all as “bits of immortality” waiting to be added to “the King’s crown;”<sup>103</sup> and certainly they would have welcomed “the lowest of the low if only they were sincere.”<sup>104</sup> However, they took pride in the fact that they put would-be converts to “the severest tests.”<sup>105</sup> In one instance, when the Rev. Zenker was asked by one Hindu how he could become a Christian, Zenker told the man to “first, consider the matter well. We are not trying to beguile you.”<sup>106</sup> They wanted to be sure they had real converts, since, on a few occasions, they had baptized someone only to watch him leave for one of many reasons within the year.<sup>107</sup> Missionaries were also suspicious of “native” reasons for wanting to get baptized, speculating that some might

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<sup>101</sup> “had been baptized in connection with the American Methodist Mission, but (as is too often the case) with an insufficiency of instruction, which left all his Brahman pride in him, and necessitated my beginning from the very elements.” BUL, Rev. Dr. W. Hooper, Annual Letters, 1894, p. 89.

<sup>102</sup> BUL, Rev. J. Erhardt, Annual Letters, 1890, p. 225.

<sup>103</sup> “Baptizing crowds of men and women and children who know nothing whatever of Christianity.” 1887, 359, Rev. A. G. Norman While they criticized those who baptized those of a lower caste en masse, they recruited from the outcastes, claiming that it is only natural for Christianity, that there are so many “bits of immortality” just waiting to be saved, so many jewels for the King’s crown. *CMS Review 1869*,

<sup>104</sup> Rev. Herklots wrote in 1904 that the Methodists followed a “disastrous policy” of “baptizing thousands of Heathens of the lowest class socially and morally who have barely heard the Name of Christ, and have abandoned none of their idolatrous and immoral practices, in the feverish desire to swell the ranks of the Indian Church and hasten the slow and stately march of the Kingdom of God.” BUL, Rev. B. Herklots, Annual Letters, 1904, p. 335.

<sup>105</sup> BUL, Rev. J. Tunbridge, Annual Letters, 1888, p. 66.

<sup>106</sup> BUL, Rev. P. M. Zenker, Annual Letters 1895, p. 140.

<sup>107</sup> Some went back to their families, and others found the habits “of old life proved too strong.” BUL, Rev. W. G. Proctor, Annual Letters, 1900, p. 405. In one instance, Rev. Herklots wrote that the boy they had “most hoped was truly converted” ran away and joined the Arya Samaj. BUL, Rev. B. Herklots, Annual Letters, 1904, p. 336.

have wanted to get back at family members who had wronged them or could not afford a Hindu wife.<sup>108</sup> On one occasion, a would-be catechumen was refused baptism because his particularly bad personal finances.<sup>109</sup>

With so few baptisms, the missionaries needed to validate their lives spent in the mission field somehow.<sup>110</sup> The easiest way for them to do this was not by claiming to have eased pain, or fed the hungry, but by claiming that they had planted a seed in some that would eventually have to bear fruit. In this sort of germination theory of religion, the reason for so few converts was simply that they were still working at the first stage: the planting of seeds.<sup>111</sup> The fruit would certainly follow. Many were not even particularly concerned about the lack of converts, since God had already promised that His word would not return to Him fruitless.<sup>112</sup> Because so many would not commit to baptism, the missionaries started to believe that there were many Christians “at heart” who were waiting to be baptized.<sup>113</sup> The “secret Christian” was a common character in missionary letters.<sup>114</sup> One missionary even wrote of a man who, giving a lecture, repeatedly assured

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<sup>108</sup> BUL, H, Annual Letters, 1887, p. 212.

<sup>109</sup> BUL, Rev. W. G. Proctor, Annual Letters, 1896, p. 591.

<sup>110</sup> For example, Rev. Hall wrote back to London in 1897, “As each year goes by I am more and more convinced that the results of Mission work in India cannot be gauged by the number of baptisms we are able to record from year to year.” BUL, Rev. J. W. Hall, Annual Letters, 1897, p. 608.

<sup>111</sup> For example, Miss Lawrence wrote in 1904 that “our work is essentially sowing.” BUL, Miss M. H. Lawrence, Annual Letters, 1904, p. 301.

<sup>112</sup> For instance, though the Rev. Carmichael was distressed by the “foolishness” many Hindus he encountered saw in the cross, still wrote that “we know, too, that this is God’s work, and that He doth go before us, and will be with us, and will not fail us.” BUL, Rev. T. Carmichael, Annual Letters, 1894, 504. Miss Tottenham wrote in 1904 that they were “encouraged to go on sowing, and just trust the Master for results.” BUL, Miss Tottenham, Annual Letters, 1905, p. 490.

<sup>113</sup> “Like many of his people, he wants to be a Christian in the heart only, not by confession. He stands before the mighty wall of caste and does not know how to get over it, and two masters he cannot, dare not, serve as long as we can prevent it.” BUL, Rev. J. Erhardt, Annual Letters, 1888, p.74.

<sup>114</sup> Miss Cole wrote, for example, wrote “there are so many like her, who have not been received into the visible Church by baptism, but do seem to have a saving faith.” BUL, Miss E. M. Cole, Annual Letters, 1912, p. 223. Similarly, Rev. Bambridge wrote that “our best work is going on in their inner hearts and hidden thoughts.” BUL, Rev. J. J. Bambridge, Annual Letters, 1889, p. 199. Also, Rev. Thomas reported: “I have tried my very best this year to lead the secret believers to confess Christ publicly.” BUL, Rev. C. S.

the audience that he was in no way a “secret Christian.” But the missionary’s letter assured the reader that, with such respect for the teachings of Jesus, he must have been a Christian at heart.<sup>115</sup>

This gradual process by which Hinduism would grow into Protestant Christianity, which these missionaries felt had itself evolved out of the “superstitious Catholicism” of the Middle Ages, was part of a larger religious Darwinism called Fulfillment Theology. J.N. Farquhar, in his *Crown of Hinduism* argued that Protestant Christianity will “fulfill” Hinduism.<sup>116</sup> According to this theory, Hinduism had tried to satisfy the “longings” of the human soul, but had failed. Historical analogies were drawn. Hinduism was compared to the Christian’s Old Testament. Rev. Pargitar of St. John’s College in Agra wrote that the Hindu mind was not yet capable of handling the “lofty ideas of the new” and that they needed a “stepping-stone,” as the Jews had long ago.<sup>117</sup>

While Fulfillment Theology did validate lives spent in missions without a single baptism, some missionaries were indeed suspicious of the theory. They were afraid that missionaries would forget the exclusivity of their faith.<sup>118</sup> Rev. Mukand warned that there was too much “of the compromising sort of preaching” and reminded his fellow missionaries that India must be won, but cannot be won “for Christ by compromise.”<sup>119</sup>

Hinduism might not be complete folly, but without Christ it was not complete at all. Of

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Thompson, Annual Letters, 1888, p. 87. Rev. Durrant gave a description of what he called “markers of a secret Christian.” BUL, Rev. H. B. Durrant, Annual Letters, 1889, p. 601.

<sup>115</sup> The man’s praise of the person of Jesus, according to the missionary, certainly made him a “secret Christian,” for “if you are for Him, then you can by no means be against Him!” BUL, Rev. H. Stern, Annual Letters, 1890, p. 228

<sup>116</sup> Farquhar, *Crown of Hinduism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1913).

<sup>117</sup> He wrote that the teaching of the Old Testament in India was especially important since the “incidents appeal strongly to lads living in idolatrous surrounding while the denunciations of the prophets strike them with all the vividness of living reality.” BUL, Rev. G. E. A. Pargitar, Annual Letters, 1888, p. 315-316.

<sup>118</sup> Bellenoit, for example, calls this Fulfillment Theology “a double-edged sword,” since recognizing the truths of other religions did not help the missionaries gain any converts. Bellenoit, *Missionary Education and Empire*, 139.

<sup>119</sup> BUL, Rev. J. N. Mukand, Annual Letters, 1912, p. 245.

course, some missionaries were affected by the religions, ethos and philosophies of India, but only a few saw real value in Hinduism. But many missionaries do seem to have found value in India's religious traditions. For example, missionary W.E.S. Holland, a man with a deep love for India and her people,<sup>120</sup> was a prime example. Based largely in Allahabad, he wrote that the Hindu belief in the immanence of God was a lesson the Christians would do well to learn.<sup>121</sup> He also saw the character of Jesus as something Indians were better able to appreciate, since they saw value in possessing His meekness and sometimes pointed out that the imperial English were not much like Jesus of the Gospels.<sup>122</sup> In a similar vein, Rev. Bose, an Indian Christian, pointed out that Hindus were much more likely to "embrace Christ" when they came to know "the sweetness of the meek and humble Jesus" rather than the "blinding pride" of the Englishman.<sup>123</sup> Rev. Butterworth also reported that some Hindus admitted "the superiority of Christ's claims over all other teachers" but that "the difference between life and creed" of the English missionaries proved "a great stumbling block."<sup>124</sup> Another Indian Christian, Mr. Chatterjii, agreed and told CMS missionaries that they should give up everything else they teach "and simply preach the character of Christ."<sup>125</sup>

CMS missionaries saw the concept of sin as crucial to genuine conversion. This ensured that they had (and documented) countless discussions about the issues they just

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<sup>120</sup> "I love these men as I loved not many men at home; and it is wonderful to see how they open their hearts to those who love them." BUL, Rev. W. E. S. Holland, Annual Letters, 1905, p. 484.

<sup>121</sup> He explained that Islam had exaggerated the Unity of God into a "cold, hard, deism," while Hinduism had done the same to the "Immanence of God," creating a "wild pantheism." He speculated that perhaps the "West" leaned too far towards "the deistic" and the "East" would make her contribution to "the full-orbed faith of the completed Church" by adding a new appreciation of that "warm truth" of the Immanence of God. BUL, Rev. W. E. S. Holland, Annual Letters, 1902, p. 447.

<sup>122</sup> W.E.S. Holland, *The Indian Outlook; A Study in the Way of Service*, (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1927), p. 21.

<sup>123</sup> BUL, Rev. R. K. Bose, Annual Letters, 1888, p. 75.

<sup>124</sup> BUL, Rev. A. Butterworth, Annual Letters, 1900, p. 417.

<sup>125</sup> BUL, Rev. Hackett, Annual Letters, , p. 221

could not agree upon. Though they had a command of many facets of North Indian culture and carefully tailored their message for different people, they did make one assumption about human nature that proved to be one of the main barriers to real communication: original sin. The missionaries' faith left no room for doubt on the subject. To the missionary, the first event in human history was the Fall. All the religious movements, from Anglo-Catholicism to the most low-church, Bible-centered Protestantism existed to help save people of the consequences of sin, whether through sacraments or through personal struggles with human nature.

The story of the Fall, and consequent "sinfulness" of man, did not easily translate into the rubric of Indian tradition. It clashed with more traditionally Hindu notions of a cyclical world, both the eternity and illusory natures of matter, *maya* (illusion), and the impersonal Absolute. Hindus were confused by the Biblical account of the creation, especially since, to some, the Almighty should not be subject to human emotions, creating something only to condemn it. One Muslim man became violently angry at the story, as it was an insult to Adam, a prophet, he actual struck a missionary and rallied the Hindus in the audience, telling them, curiously, that the missionary was calling "the Mabadeva, [sic] the God Shiva," names.<sup>126</sup> Sometimes a Brahmin might use the story of the Fall to prove how silly a missionary was. For example, one missionary, Mr. R. Baker, wrote of a time when he was preaching in a bazaar and, afterwards, a group of Brahmins came up to him and asked him to explain how sin came into the world. The missionary began to, but the Brahmins "just smirked" and "turned piece by piece into laughter and ridicule."<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> BUL, Rev. S. Nihal Singh, Annual Letters, 1892, 20-22.

<sup>127</sup> BUL, Rev. Mr. R. Baker, Annual Letters, 1894, p. 75.

Notions of sin and man as “fallen,” were barriers to real communication, since missionaries and Hindus held such different ideas of human nature. But the idea of personal redemption was probably the biggest single barrier to communication that existed between missionaries and Indians. Since missionaries could not find in India a concept of- let alone a precise Indian word for- personal sin, there was no real communication when the missionary preached personal salvation. Similarly, the cyclical worldview did not allow for the idea that after death there was a “judgment” that placed souls in distinct categories for eternity.<sup>128</sup> Since there was no distinction between physical and moral impurity, there was no understanding of how believing a doctrine could possibly be more effective for cleansing than the holy Ganges.<sup>129</sup> The missionaries, in a manifestation of their religious Darwinism, believed that it was only “a matter of time” before people realized “that sin is moral also” and that “the waters of Gunga’s holy tide no longer avail for soul-cleansing.”<sup>130</sup> Yet many Hindus maintained that custom and ritual were indistinguishable from faith.<sup>131</sup> One asked, for example, “When I eat what Christians eat, shall I become a Christian?”<sup>132</sup> The idea that man was fallen and could, by right belief, recover a lost state was foreign to many and, as Rev.

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<sup>128</sup> The sense of urgency that this instilled in the missionary from early on was not present for the Hindu. Many say that they believe the teachings of Jesus and even that he might prove able to “save” them, but they feel no urgent need to convert and tell the missionaries to give them time to “think it over.” BUL, Heaton, Annual Letters, 1890, p. 320. In a similar vein, some say that they do not “wish to be in any hurry taking such an important step.” BUL, Rev. T. F. Robathan, Annual Letters, 1888, p. 74.

<sup>129</sup> BUL, Rev. J. Erhardt, Annual Letters, 1888, p. 320.

<sup>130</sup> *CMS Intelligencer 1892*, 128.

<sup>131</sup> In fact, this was, according to Rev. Waller, the question of what was “social system” and what was religion in India was “one of the most difficult questions which Missions have to face.” BUL, Rev. H. M. Waller, Annual Letters, 1898, p. 23.

<sup>132</sup> BUL, Rev. J. Erhardt, Annual Letters, 1888, p. 320.

Molony expressed, “sin and salvation, though the most often insisted upon are not so easily accepted.”<sup>133</sup>

It seems that many, even those who were baptized, had no real grasp of the missionaries’ idea of redemption through faith. When Indians spoke of Jesus, they referred to someone they admire, pray to and even love, but not as a “ransom for the sins of man” or of loving with “redeeming love.” Even those who called Jesus their “Savior” seem to be using the word as another name much more than as a job-description. For example, one woman said to a missionary, “Your Jesus is a wonderful Savior, but I cannot yet see how He could lay down His life for the sin of the whole world.”<sup>134</sup> This is the most obvious example of the fact that the word “savior” was not always used with an understanding of the missionaries’ concept of redemption. In one lecture, attended by the missionary Rev. Santer, a Hindu taught that the question of “how to be saved... was a problem which had from the beginning exercised men’s minds” and had only been “solved” by Jesus, whose “life of entire self-sacrifice, shows how to do the will of God in all relationships in life.”<sup>135</sup> Even though this man found much to admire in the person of Jesus, he did not share the missionary view of “saving faith,” that there could be a Man to whom “to look is to be saved.”<sup>136</sup>

This lack of mutual understanding is partially because the missionaries did not have an answer for the Hindu as to how faith in Jesus could forgive sins. The question itself put the missionary in a difficult situation. If he told the Hindu about the Old Testament God who demanded blood for the “forgiveness of sin,” Hindus often replied

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<sup>133</sup> BUL, Rev. H. J. Molony, Annual Letters, 1894, p. 94.

<sup>134</sup> BUL, Cotton, Annual Letters, , p. 87.

<sup>135</sup> BUL, Rev. A. J. Santer, Annual Letters, 1889, p. 104.

<sup>136</sup> BUL, Mrs. E. Durrant, Annual Letters, 1900, p. 463.

that missionaries had no right to chastise their rituals or assert the supremacy of this “God” who was not even a vegetarian! In some instances missionaries just ignored the question altogether. In one case, Rev Carmichael was asked by “a pundit, an old enemy of the truth,” to explain “salvation.” Carmichael wrote in his annual letter to London in 1888 that instead of answering, he “severely rebuked them for trifling with such a solemn subject and told them rather to seek it in penitent faith and prayer.”<sup>137</sup>

The missionaries were highly methodical in their presentation of the Gospel, and were most comfortable when they could work in a step-by-step model. For example, one of Rev. Carmichael’s Pahari helpers could not understand how Jesus’ blood could wash away sin. In order to better explain, Carmichael wrote the word *pap* (the Hindu word closest to “sin,” but used to mean either physical or moral impurity) in ink on a piece of paper and asked the helper if a hundred “superstitious *pujas*” or worship of a hundred idols could remove it. He admitted that neither could. The missionary then took out an ink eraser (to represent Jesus) and erased the word *pap*.<sup>138</sup> One of the reasons they had to resort to making Jesus an ink eraser to (somewhat) explain their faith was the lack of connection regarding the Fall. This barrier to communication was further fortified by the fact that there was no notion of saving “faith,” of “saving knowledge” in Hinduism. There are “saving” rites and rituals, but the idea that “belief” in something could forgive sins was foreign. As Rev. A. Stern poignantly put it, “the idea that God-who is almighty-should pray and beseech man to believe, was utterly foreign to his [the Hindus] notions.”<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> BUL, Rev. T. Carmichael, Annual Letters, 1888, p. 77.

<sup>138</sup> BUL, Rev. T. Carmichael, Annual Letters, 1889, p. 584.

<sup>139</sup> BUL, Rev. H. Stern, Annual Letters, 1889, p. 261.

India did, however, have a tradition of saving love.<sup>140</sup> The only times that missionaries and Hindus actually seem to be communicating was when they were discussing love for Jesus. This seemed to resonate with a general Indian reverence for the holy man and ascetic: meek, humble, long-suffering, lover of the poor and healer of the sick.<sup>141</sup> For instance, Rev. McLean wrote of a man who, having read the Gospels of St. John and St. Luke, was “struck with the purity, simplicity, and humility of our Lord’s life” and taught the parables he had memorized to the people as he went along.<sup>142</sup> In a similar vein, Rev. Durrand attended a lecture in which a Hindu taught the Jesus “was no European, but a true Asiatic- the King and Prince of Orientals. It was a misfortune that He had been brought to India by Europeans, and more or less in the guise of a European.”<sup>143</sup> Yet these Hindus did not just believe Jesus to be a worthy teacher and nothing more. They did see Him as a wise instructor, but also as a god to be loved- just not the only Son of God. They believed with the missionaries that He could come to their aid and bring them comfort. There were numerous instances in which people in missionary hostels say things to the effect of “your Jesus is the only one who can help us when we are in trouble.”<sup>144</sup> Rev. Holland claimed there were many times “when we have knelt together and Hindu lips have tremblingly uttered their hearts’ longings to our one Father.”<sup>145</sup> Even when they were just admiring the person of Jesus, they were doing so in a decidedly Indian way, for example, one Hindu told Rev. Treanor that he preferred Jesus because He was “less prone to excess than Mohammad.”<sup>146</sup> In many of these cases, the

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<sup>140</sup> Bellenoit, *Education and Empire*, 135.

<sup>141</sup> BUL, Mr. R. Baker, Annual Letters, 1894, p. 76.

<sup>142</sup> BUL, Rev. W. L. McLean, Annual Letters, 1894, p. 77.

<sup>143</sup> BUL, Rev. G. B. Durrand, Annual Letters, 1889, p. 162.

<sup>144</sup> BUL, Miss M. E. Schneider, Annual Letters, 1905, p. 508.

<sup>145</sup> BUL, Rev. W. E. S. Holland, Annual Letters, 1903, p. 400.

<sup>146</sup> BUL, Rev. W. V. K. Treanor, Annual Letters, 1902, p. 308.

missionaries do not seem to have sacrificed the main theological doctrine in order to achieve some sort of ‘dialogue.’

A close reading of CMS Annual Letters and *Intelligencers* offers insight into the actual interactions between these missionaries and those they encountered while in north India. The sources suggest that India’s traditionally Hindu reverence for holy men and tradition of loving devotion to their gods allowed them to connect with missionaries in worship of Jesus, a common role-model and deity. However, there were also barriers to communication, especially concerning different conceptions of the Godhead, sin and salvation.

### **3. The Arya Samaj & the CMS Missionaries**

At first glance, it might seem that the relationship of the Arya Samaj to the CMS missionaries was one of simple mimicry. The Arya Samaj undoubtedly employed missionary methods of organization and evangelization, making central doctrinal points from religious ideas that had never previously existed in Hinduism (such as the notion of conversion or the idea that religious leaders serve, not as ritual priests, but as instructors in a sacred text). Yet, even within the most obvious imitations of low-church Anglicanism, the larger conversation between missionary and Hindu, in which the two often entirely missed one another, is still evident. With respect to the two key issues of salvation and the nature of the Godhead, the teachings of the Samaj show its founder and members to be steeped in a longer Indian tradition, one certainly not borrowed from the missionaries. In a way, members of the Samaj, in their response to Christianity, were not so different from those Hindus who outwardly adopted so much from CMS missionaries.

But the Arya Samaj never took on missionary ideas of God, sin and salvation. Like the lack of conversation between missionaries and those in their hostels, this demonstrates the completely different worldviews of the Christians and Hindus that proved obstacles to real ‘dialogue.’

The idea of Hindu “reform” was not new to the late 1800s. Earlier in the century, the Bengali reformer Rammohun Roy (1772-1833) perceived his own spiritual identity as being “under attack” and so, in an attempt to salvage what he could of ancient tradition and give his culture a place in the modern world, he started a group called the Brahmo Samaj.<sup>147</sup> He did not see any one religion as better than the next; rather, he believed all religions to be systems of regulating men’s actions designed to “elevate men’s ideas to high and liberal notions of one God.” Roy was, and continues to be, seen as “the pioneer of all living advance... in the Hindu community,”<sup>148</sup> “the political spokesman of India,”<sup>149</sup> “the first Indian liberal,”<sup>150</sup> an “enlightened social reformer”<sup>151</sup> and “the first nation-builder of modern India”<sup>152</sup> Though he is remembered so fondly, his Brahmo Samaj is often characterized as a mere “trickle of Protestantism” that betrayed a larger

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<sup>147</sup> Rai, *Young India*, 111. This idea of rescuing India from Empire can be seen in Roy’s own words, as quoted by Bhatt: “The present system of Hindoos is not well calculated to promote their political interests... It is necessary that some change should take place in their religion, at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort. Gauri Shankar Bhatt, “Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, and the Church-Sect Typology” *Review of Religious Research* 10 no. 1 (1968), 24. As implied in the name, it was a society (*samaj*) of those who acknowledged Brahma, the one, all-powerful God of the Upanishads and of Vedanta philosophy. J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (Delhi, 1967), 29. Roy’s influences were certainly not limited to Hindu texts; he was educated in the Indo-Islamic cultural world, studied English and, to better his understanding of Christianity, learned Hebrew and Greek as well. His writings assign a oneness to God that draws heavily from both his admiration of Islam and his dealings with European Deism. *Ibid.* 30-33

<sup>148</sup> Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements*, 29.

<sup>149</sup> Bhatt, “Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, and the Church-Sect Typology,” 24.

<sup>150</sup> Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 293.

<sup>151</sup> Frykenberg, *Christianity in India*, 273.

<sup>152</sup> Rai, *Young India*, 111. He was the one, in the worlds of Max Muller, “who came from East to West, the first to join hands and to complete that worldwide circle through which henceforth, like an electric current, Oriental thought could run to the West and Western thought return to the East.” David Smith, *Hinduism and Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 39-40.

loss of confidence in the native traditions of India.<sup>153</sup> For this reason, missionaries never seemed particularly threatened by Roy.<sup>154</sup> One missionary, Rev. Latham, wrote that he and several other missionaries had attended a Brahmo service together and, far from being distraught, were pleased with the readings from Psalms and Job and the subsequent sermon on self-sacrifice.<sup>155</sup> Clearly, the relationship between the missionaries and the Brahmos was hardly one of competition or antagonism.

A later group, the Arya Samaj, interacted much more with the missionaries in north India in terms of frequency and quality. This encounter was, for our purposes here, both qualitatively and quantitatively more intense than anything Roy and the Brahmos achieved. Whereas the Brahmo Samaj in north India was described by missionaries as being less inclined to “active opposition,” and “nearer to us in creed,”<sup>156</sup> the newer Arya Samaj were often described as the “most aggressive and open opponents” of the missionaries.<sup>157</sup> The Brahmo desire for peaceful, intellectual engagement of other faiths, as well as the ability to draw lessons from religious figures the world over would later be preserved in Vivekananda’s Ramakrishna Math and Mission, but was entirely unacceptable to members of the Arya Samaj.

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<sup>153</sup> Rai, *Young India*, 40. It has long been acknowledged that the group’s weekly services mimicked Protestant practices; (*Ibid.* 39-40) and in fact, before Roy, there was no notion of communal worship of that nature in Hinduism at all. For example, Farquhar wrote: “We must also note that the form of the service arranged by Ram Mohan is Christian. Congregational worship is unknown in the ancient Hinduism which he believed he was restoring.” Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements*, 39.

<sup>154</sup> They usually described the Samaj as the only one of the “reforming Hindu sects” that was certainly not “anti-Christian.” In fact, they saw the reforms (regarding idolatry, especially) and the idea of theism as something that would pave the way “for the triumph of Him Whom they now oppose- just as Neo-Platonism did in the early Christian centuries.” BUL, Rev. Dr. W. Hooper, Annual Letters, 1902, p. 400.

<sup>155</sup> BUL, Rev. W. Latham, Annual Letters, 1889, p. 249.

<sup>156</sup> BUL, Rev. G. B. Durrand, Annual Letters, 1889, p. 162.

<sup>157</sup> BUL, Rev. J. A. F. Warren, Annual Letters, 1904, p. 293. Miss Davis echoes this sentiment in describing women whose Arya husbands present themselves as most “aggressive” opponents of their work, preventing their wives from reading any Christian scripture at all. BUL, Miss B. Davis, Annual Letters, 1911, p. 159.

The Arya Samaj, founded in 1875 by Swami Dayananda Saraswati, (1824-1883)<sup>158</sup> was different from the Brahmo Samaj in terms of attitude, organization and especially in its relationship to missionaries. There were some similarities, for instance in Dayananda's call for sweeping reforms and distaste for popular, idolatrous Hinduism. But, on a whole, the Arya Samaj was born out of a much more proudly Indian (*deshi*) sentiment.<sup>159</sup> Of course, they could not avoid entirely any comparison with the "West," but unlike the Brahmo search for similarities between faiths, the inquiry towards the basis of ethical equality of religion, the Aryas remained convinced of the superiority of Indian tradition.

Initially, this did not lend itself to friendly relations with missionaries. While not every interaction was necessarily a shouting match at a bazaar, none were as quaint and peaceful as the scene in which a few missionaries peacefully attended a Brahmo service. The relationship between missionaries and Aryas was one of constant confrontation. Missionary accounts are rarely of civil religious discourse, but of bands of preachers who engage missionaries "not simply to commend their own religion but to ridicule Christianity before large and sympathetic audiences."<sup>160</sup> Rev. Carmichael, based in Meerut, called the Aryas "the new Hindu" and said they, "the great opponents of Christianity," could often be found proposing what he termed "catch" questions to the missionaries. For example, he wrote that many times the stock questions began with an inquiry as to why Jesus, in the Synoptic Gospels, asks "Why callest thou Me good?"<sup>161</sup> But, for all their differences, it seems the missionaries viewed the Samaj as a worthy

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<sup>158</sup> Watt, *Serving the Nation*, 220.

<sup>159</sup> An age Farquhar sees as this the age when "the educated Indian suddenly grew up, and shewed that he had a mind of his own." Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements*, 101.

<sup>160</sup> BUL, Annual Letters, 1887, p. 140.

<sup>161</sup> BUL, Mr. A. Carmichael, Annual Letters, 1899, p. 581.

opponent. As the missionaries connected themselves to the first Christians, the Aryas played the role of the “Greeks of old.”<sup>162</sup> For example, Rev. H. B. Durrant paid Samajis the complement of describing them as “earnest, narrow, bigoted, prejudiced” and “some of our best students.”<sup>163</sup> In a similar vein, Rev. Waller vouched that the Arya Samaj showed “much ingenuity” in their objections to Christianity, and only lamented that “such ingenuity should be exercised in the wrong direction.”<sup>164</sup>

Occasionally, missionaries would place the Arya Samaj on their Darwinian religious trajectory. Though they disagreed so fundamentally on many issues, some saw the abolition of idolatry as a step away from Hinduism and towards Christianity. Rev J. M. Paterson wrote from Agra that despite the fact that many missionaries believed that Samaj to be “a device of the Evil One to present morality to India without a Christ,” he believed that the only outcome of this moral code would be “knowledge of sin” in a land where such knowledge was largely absent. In this land in which the sins of “the great and mighty are regarded as sport and play” while the mere “existence of the menial class” was sin, Rev. Paterson did not see how a moral code could do any harm.<sup>165</sup>

However, regardless of the moral code, other encounters show that Aryas and missionaries maintained completely different ideas of sin. Whereas the missionary was bound to sin, unable to free himself without the help of Jesus,<sup>166</sup> the moral code of the Aryas was something they were able to abide by. This was endlessly frustrating to Mr. Carmichael, who met a Samajist who claimed “the way of salvation is easy” and is only a matter of “making personal efforts” to gradually “get rid of sin.” Mr. Carmichael,

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<sup>162</sup> BUL, Rev. A. Butterworth, Annual Letters, 1898, p. 609.

<sup>163</sup> BUL, Rev. H. B. Durrant, Annual Letters, 1911, p. 149.

<sup>164</sup> BUL, Rev. E. H. M. Waller, Annual Letters, 1899, p. 529.

<sup>165</sup> BUL, Rev. J. M. Paterson, Annual Letters, 1900, p. 553.

<sup>166</sup> BUL, Rev. T. Carmichael, Annual Letters, 1899, p.582.

convinced that sin is a fundamental part of the human condition and impossible to overcome in this life, tried to tell the man that if he had in fact achieved a state of sinlessness, he was a greater man than “even the Queen-Empress.”<sup>167</sup> Much the same as those in missionary hostels who believed Jesus to be someone who “saves me from evil deeds”<sup>168</sup> rather than from human nature, the Arya Samaj never took on missionary views of the “sinfulness” of man. Clearly the moral code of the Aryas was not borrowed from the missionaries. For the Aryas, one was a set of rules that could be followed, whereas the other was a statement about the nature of being human.

As the number of students who had been ‘rescued’ by Aryas from mission schools grew, Aryas became increasingly aware of missionary doctrine and methods, which they would at times mock and at times mimic in equal tempo. By the turn of the century, many members of the Samaj were “old pupils” of mission schools whose newfound opposition to Christianity was a “great grief” to many missionaries.<sup>169</sup> Their growing numbers, which the missionaries fearfully reported,<sup>170</sup> was also a threat to the CMS cause in that so many new Samaj members had a base knowledge of Christianity and Scripture, from which they drew their harshest criticisms. The Samaj first needed to address the issue of exactly how they were going to go about re-entering those who were baptized Christians into the Hindu fold. Hinduism technically had “neither the concepts not the rituals” of conversion.<sup>171</sup> However, the Samaj needed a way to let these young men they had rescued from mission schools back in the fold. So they, in a way, redefined the concept

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<sup>167</sup> BUL, Mr. A. Carmichael, Annual Letters, 1899, p. 581.

<sup>168</sup> BUL, Miss J. E. Puckle, Annual Letters, 1900, p. 467.

<sup>169</sup> BUL, Rev. Thwaiter, Annual Letters, 1887, p. 176.

<sup>170</sup> For example, Rev. Zenker wrote that “a priest... has informed me that the nominal adherents... amount to about 40,000”. BUL, Rev. Zenker, Annual Letters, 1886, p. 39.

<sup>171</sup> Kenneth W. Jones, “Swami Dayananda’s Critique of Christianity” *Religious Controversy in British India: Dialogues in South Asian Languages* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 52.

of “*shuddi*,” originally a Hindu purification ritual. They recast it in the mold of Christian baptism, making it a way for those who had fallen away to reenter the Hindu fold.

However, it soon transformed into a way in which a group of people could reconvert, and later still into a way in which a group could be “purified” from their untouchable state.<sup>172</sup>

This shows that even when they took on missionary forms of religion, like this obvious imitation of baptism, Hindu ideas remained. For instance, the idea of an individual choosing his “religion” was unheard of, and usually one of the most distressing things to a missionary. One missionary wrote that the extended family was the reason there were no individual conversions, the most intricate stronghold of Hinduism.<sup>173</sup> The purification of untouchables showed the Hindu fear of missionaries “stealing” low or no caste people, as the all-India census of 1871 revealed Hinduism to be a religion that was on the decline, with Christian converts increasing by 410 percent from the previous decade.<sup>174</sup>

“Hinduism” until this point, was something that an individual was born into and could never really doctrinally ‘leave,’ making a conversion rite entirely unnecessary.

*Shuddi*, though meant to mirror (and combat the effects of) Christian baptism, serves to highlight the differences between Hindu and Christian ideas of salvation. Such as those to whom the missionaries preached who never understood or adopted CMS views of salvation, the Arya Samaj may have created a conversion ritual, but they never adopted a belief in personal conversion. This is evidenced by the fact that the rite quickly morphed into a way to bring groups of young men back into the fold of “Hinduism.” This highlights one of the main doctrinal points of Swami Dayananda: forgiveness is impossible. He was a man whose life and teachings were wrought with inconsistencies

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<sup>172</sup> Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements*, 101.

<sup>173</sup> *CMS Intelligencer 1892*, 813.

<sup>174</sup> Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements*, 100.

and sometimes shrouded in mystery, partially his own fault or desire and partially due to the fractional nature of the group whose only truth was the validity of the Vedas. Yet, Dayananda stood firm on the issue of salvation. Whereas a Hindu being taught in a mission school might beg for clarification, asking repeatedly “how does your Christ forgive sins?”,<sup>175</sup> or “how is it that Christ is able to raise a fallen man?”<sup>176</sup>, Dayananda stated simply that he could not. Dayananda held to his belief in karma and the transmigration of souls (*samsara*) and finds it preposterous, even childish, that one man could take on the bad karma of another.

He similarly found it ridiculous that a god would create something only to call it evil. This rejection of foreign notions of salvation equally spoke to a larger question of the nature of the Godhead. Dayananda’s critique of Christianity was harshest in terms of the Christian deity, who Dayananda believed was not the one God of the universe. The Vedic view of God as changeless, eternal bliss, not subject to human emotion, made the idea of God regretting and needing to fix his creation seem illogical.

In a way, for all the doctrinal differences between the two groups, the idea of how different traditions relate to one another was the biggest difference between the Arya Samaj and other groups, such as the Ramakrishna Mission. Dayananda and members of the Arya Samaj believed Vedic Hinduism was superior to Christianity. Often times, Aryas adopted missionary tactics to convey this Indo-centric attitude. Beyond opening schools and orphanages, they also used tracts and pamphlets to spread their message, in another obvious imitation of the CMS missionaries. However, it seems that they did not just mirror the methods of missionaries; they took Christian criticisms of Hinduism,

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<sup>175</sup> BUL, Singh, Annual Letters, 1902, p. 276.

<sup>176</sup> *CMS Intelligencer* 1909, 151.

applied them to Christianity and then made those into central doctrinal points. For instance, many missionary pamphlets attacked the divinity of different Hindu gods. Common missionary tracts included *Ram Pariksha* (Ram tested or examined) and *Krishu Pariksha*, in which a quotation from “one of the sacred Native books” was followed by a missionary explanation of why this god was not actually divine. The content was very similar to missionary tracts in that they acknowledged one eternal God and then took instances from the life of this particular god (in this case, Jesus) that proved the two were not one. For example, one common argument was that Jesus could not be divine because (by the missionaries’ own admission) he asked to have “this cup pass” from him, cried out that he was forsaken by God, and clearly did not know everything that God would know (for example, who would betray him).<sup>177</sup> In almost all missionary accounts of interactions with Aryas, they question the divinity of Jesus. Just as the missionaries would teach that the gods of Hinduism were not all-knowing or all-powerful, the Aryas did the same to the person of Jesus. Since the Arya Samaj was influential “outside of their circle,”<sup>178</sup> many missionaries were confronted by these theological attacks frequently.<sup>179</sup>

The mantras of Protestants and Aryas were “Back to the Bible” and “Back to the Vedas,” respectively. But upon closer inspection these groups treated their sacred

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<sup>177</sup> They would often point out that Jesus did not know that Judas would betray him. If he had been aware, they argued, he would not have told his followers that someday the twelve tribes of Israel would be judged by the twelve apostles. BUL, Rev. E. H. M. Waller, Annual Letters, 1899, p. 529.

<sup>178</sup> BUL, Rev. Zenker, Annual Letters, 1886, p. 39.

<sup>179</sup> For example, Rev. Baumann wrote of a man who he did not know to be connected with the Aryas who questioned Jesus’ divinity in much the same way. According to this man, by calling out on the cross, ‘My God, why hast Thou forsaken me,’ he was proving his own distance from God. He further claimed it was not good for the missionaries to seek peace in Jesus, since he “was more sorrowful than other men” and “a man cannot give to others what he himself has not.” Baumann wrote that these were “typical instances of the class of people and objections that we have to deal with.” BUL, Rev. Dr. C. Baumann, Annual Letters, 1896, p. 239.

scripture and text differently. The historicity of the Bible was crucial to Christianity and CMS missionaries. However Hinduism generally taught that the Vedas were the timeless, eternal word of God. Dayananda made it clear that this was his conviction. Their different treatment of the text betrays completely different views of history. Another similar publication, 'Self-contradictions in the Bible,' seemed to take missionary criticisms of Hindu holy texts and apply them to the Christian scripture. It made a similar case for the God of the Old Testament not being the one God both sides acknowledge, but also speaks to a larger question of Hindu and Christian views of sacred scripture. Aryas strangely maintained that the Vedas were not written over time, but were the eternal, timeless words of God and that anything that seems to speak of a historical person or to a time in history is only a mistranslation on the part of the reader. One Hindu could not elicit a satisfactory response from a missionary when repeatedly he asked how a religion began only 1800 years ago.<sup>180</sup> The CMS missionaries believed that they were preparing the world for Jesus's reign, but for the Aryas, the Golden Age had already passed. While the Christian looked forward to the day of Jesus' return and to a religiously fulfilled future, the Aryas looked back towards the Vedic Golden Age.

Interestingly, during a time when there was much Indian discussion of how many of their traditions were indigenous, especially Krishna and *bhakti*,<sup>181</sup> Lala Lajpat Rai's *A History of the Arya Samaj* borrowed heavily from Protestant hagiography of Martin Luther.<sup>182</sup> Rai compared corruption in the Brahmins to the priests of Roman Catholicism, saying that Brahmins of Dayananda's time made "medieval popes look like constitutional

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<sup>180</sup> BUL, Miss H. M. Forbes, Annual Letters, 1900, p. 428.

<sup>181</sup> Bellenoit, *Education and Empire*, 132-133.

<sup>182</sup> This seems to add to Rai's goal in writing the book, which was to provide an "occidental" account of the Arya Samaj and its doctrine for an English-speaking audience. Rai, *The History of the Arya Samaj*, 1-2.

monarchs.”<sup>183</sup> According to Rai, without knowing anything of the West, Dayananda advocated that Brahmins have the same role as Protestant ministers. Instead of hoarding knowledge, as a Roman priest might, the Brahmin’s job was to interpret the Vedas, translate them into the vernacular and present their wisdom to the masses. Rai, in his conclusion, does not ignore the charges of “active hostility” towards Christianity, but insists that this was necessary, as it was standing up to two “militant Churches,” namely Christianity and Islam.<sup>184</sup> Even though Rai casted Dayananda as Martin Luther, he was a part of the larger conversation in which Indians were proud of the culture indigenous to India, and certainly not trying to mimic the British.

There were interesting similarities and striking differences between emerging “Hindu” groups and their interactions with the missionaries. On the one hand, the Arya Samaj rejected so much of Christianity, and attacked the person of Jesus, yet its founder became known as the Martin Luther of Hinduism and the organization itself mirrors missionary tactics in almost every way. The Samaj remained “Hindu” only in that it retained a very Impersonal Godhead and, underneath the idea that Brahmins rather than priests, “Hindu” ideas of caste were present. On the other hand, the Ramakrishna Math and Mission took an approach in which there was something to be learned from “East and West.” Like the missionaries, founder Vivekananda taught a personal, loving relationship with God, the divinity of Jesus, and the spiritual necessity of hard work and charity. He believed in ideas of progress and had visions of the eventual unity of man. This group’s acceptance of several major tenets of Christianity and other faiths made it less “Christian” in that it would never push for conversion because it held all faiths to be

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<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.* 50.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.* 182.

of equal worth. Vivekananda's ideas of religion as a "stepping stone" sound like Fulfillment Theology, but instead of mankind growing towards Christianity (or any religion, for that matter), it was growing towards abandoning all religion for a personal experience of God.

#### **4. The Ramakrishna Math and Mission**

Because they were so different in their origins, means and ends, yet influenced by the very same missionaries, the Ramakrishna Math (Monastery) and Mission is worth studying alongside the Arya Samaj. The groups shared several key characteristics. For example, both had a connection with the larger Hindu tradition, but were clearly influenced by the wider missionary presence in India. The founders of both organizations were important figures who remain essential to an understanding of "Hinduism" as it developed over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries into a more 'religious' system. From the missionary example, they both drew methods and templates of religion from missionary work and even seem influenced by doctrinal issues raised. Yet both maintained traditionally "Indian" notions of the nature of the Godhead, sin and salvation, but in newer, slightly different ways. Both held strongly to a belief in the divine and timeless origins of the Vedas, the looser notion of a single, enigmatic God, and the superiority of India's indigenous religious traditions. The Ramakrishna Mission, unlike the Arya Samaj, remained decidedly anti-conversion, taught that there was no distinction between the soul of the world and the soul of the individual, and taught that salvation (unlike the Christian salvation in which some element of the person exists forever) is ceasing to exist at all. The groups also differed in that the Arya Samaj used

missionary “tactics” of conversion to weaken Christian holdings, remaining within geographic boundaries more in line with the original meaning of Hinduism.<sup>185</sup> The Ramakrishna Mission, by contrast, was less geographically-minded. They used the concept of “religion” as the tactic by which they hoped to achieve “the conquest of the world by India.”<sup>186</sup> Vivekananda, founder of the Ramakrishna Mission, was the first to take Hinduism to “West.” Almost in spite of his universalistic teachings, he brought converts back to his homeland and established Vedanta temples in his path,<sup>187</sup> clearly breaking from a more geographic understanding of Hinduism.

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) was very much in touch with what he referred to as “the West” and the colonial milieu. He was born and raised in Calcutta and attended the Scottish Church College there. Some have argued that the rationalism and positivism he learned there surfaced in his teaching many years later.<sup>188</sup> Even after his time living with the otherworldly mystic, and now famed guru, Ramakrishna, he was aware of world events to the point of knowing that there was to be a World Parliament of Religion in Chicago in 1893. He raised enough funds to travel to the United States as the representative of a larger “Hindu” tradition. Like Dayananda, he believed in the “superiority” of Hinduism as a philosophical system. But unlike Dayananda, he did not try to challenge “Western” religion in the more conventional sense of proving that

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<sup>185</sup> According to Rai, the Arya Samaj was not noticed by “outsiders” before 1907 and was actually “quite content to continue their work amongst their own people and attract no attention from the outside world.” Rai, *A History of the Arya Samaj*, 1-2. Of course, this is not to say that Dayananda believed Hinduism to be only a geographic descriptor; in his *Light of Truth*, he taught that an Indian does not necessarily lose his “character” in going abroad. Swami Dayananda, *Light of Truth or An English Translation of the Satyarth Prakash* (New Delhi: Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, 1975), 315.

<sup>186</sup> Jones, *Socio-religious Reform Movements*, 45.

<sup>187</sup> As of 2004, there were 147 Ramakrishna Math and Mission centers “around the world.” Gwilym Beckerlegge, “The Early Spread of Vedanta Societies: An Example of “Imported Localism” *Numen* 51 no. 3 (2004), 296.

<sup>188</sup> Paul Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Traditional and Modern Vedanta* edited by Wilhelm Halbfass, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 319.

Christianity's god was not the one God of the universe, or that Jesus was not an incarnation. Instead, he challenged the notion that salvation was a matter of belief or doctrine at all, teaching that all creed and ritual was a means to a vision of God and nothing more.

He certainly saw what Europe and America had to contribute as far as work ethic, social consciousness and material skill. In spite of all this, he held tightly to his belief in India's spiritual superiority. He believed in the vision of the "spiritual East" and "material West" and hoped that the day would come when the two would create a better world. Dr. Welldon, recorded in the 1900 letter of Rev. J. J. Johnson, taught that when "the speculative wisdom of the East and the practical wisdom of the West- *sophia* and *phronesis*" the human intellect will be better able to achieve the "supreme goal of truth."<sup>189</sup> Vivekananda approached the issue of "East" meets "West" much differently. He hoped to only take railroads, sports and postage systems from the West, and in every other way put the rest of the world in a position as the students, with Hindus being the real gurus. For all his endlessly tolerant and universalistic teachings, his mission and spread of Hinduism remained an attempt to conquer the world for India.<sup>190</sup>

The character of Vivekananda himself remains somewhat difficult to unravel. Vivekananda's Scottish education, his relationship with mystic Ramakrishna, his time abroad and especially his clearly exaggerated writing style make him something of a mysterious character for historians. Where some, such as Leo Schneiderman, find a

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<sup>189</sup> BUL, Rev. J. J. Johnson, Annual Letters, 1900, p. 536. This is expressed again in 1914 when W. G. Cecil wrote that they were all "surely at a great point in the history of our world, when East and West mingle together in a common civilization." *CMS Intelligencer 1914*, 14.

<sup>190</sup> He awaited "a wonderful and glorious future" for India in which she would be "seated on her eternal throne, rejuvenated, more glorious than she ever was." B. G. Gokhale, "Swami Vivekananda and Indian Nationalism" *Journal of Bible and Religion* 32 no. 1 (1964), 38.

sincere man fighting for the survival of his religious tradition,<sup>191</sup> others, such as Paul Hacker, see a fierce nationalist,<sup>192</sup> whilst others, such as Narasingha P. Sil, find an egotistical, self-serving master of deception.<sup>193</sup> Whatever the reason, though, the message that he wanted the “West” to hear is relatively clear: all religions are equal in that they, in their best form, lead to a relationship with God- but Vedantism is superior for its knowledge of this. In this way, it seems remarkably similar to Fulfillment Theology, but it differs in that missionaries believed that the entire world was growing towards the salvation by means of faith in Jesus, while Vivekananda taught that the world was growing towards an appreciation of all faiths, a realization that they all lead to the same God. Vedantism, according to him, was superior in that it realized this before any other tradition.

The interactions between the Ramakrishna Mission and CMS missionaries were much different in nature than the interactions between the Arya Samaj and CMS missionaries. Unlike members of the Arya Samaj, members of the Ramakrishna Mission did not aggressively oppose missionaries in the bazaar, or build schools and hostels for the sole purpose of “stealing back” converts to Christianity. Occasionally, they were dismissed as being more European than Indian and only “anti-Christian” because they were “anti-British.” For example, A. E. Johnson, in the 1911 *CMS Intelligencer*, wrote that “the self-styled Vivekananda” was inspired more by Europe than by his own religious tradition, citing the fact that Hinduism traditionally calls for Brahmins to be

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<sup>191</sup> Leo Schneiderman, “Personality and Social Factors in the Growth of a Religious Movement” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 8 no. 1 (1969), 71.

<sup>192</sup> Paul Hacker, *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Traditional and Modern Vedanta* edited by Wilhelm Halbfass, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 324. Gokhale called him the “fulfillment of Hindu nationalism as it began to develop since 1875.” B.G. Gokhale, “Swami Vivekananda and Indian Nationalism” *Journal of Bible and Religion* 32 no. 1 (1964), 41.

<sup>193</sup> The title says it all in Narasingha P. Sil, “Vivekananda’s Ramakrishna: An Untold Story of Mythmaking and Propaganda” *Numen* 40 no. 1 (1993), 38-62.

religious instructors and Vivekananda was a Kayastha (a writing caste).<sup>194</sup> One missionary speculated that perhaps it was their own influence that brought about the Ramakrishna Mission's dedication to charity.<sup>195</sup> Certainly, from the missionary's description, it would seem to be the case, as the "Ram Krishna Home of Service Movement" took in all, regardless of race, caste or religion. However, Vivekananda's charitable zeal is now viewed as part of a larger trend<sup>196</sup> and perhaps even influenced by his time in America.<sup>197</sup> The Ramakrishna Mission was viewed suspiciously, as a fellow competitor with missionaries and the Samaj in the struggle for Indian souls. One missionary warned that all Indian movements "reformed and revised and reformed again" should be part of a "serious element of consideration" as they were likely to snatch souls who had awoken from the superstition of idolatry and "promise them a salvation without Christ."<sup>198</sup>

Like Dayananda, Vivekananda took missionary templates of religion and cast Indians as certain key figures in the Christian faith. Whereas Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928) wrote Dayananda as the Martin Luther of Hinduism, Vivekananda made his teacher, Ramakrishna, into a Christ-figure. He became the Saint Paul of the movement. It seems he attempted to establish legitimacy in the West by associating his teacher's

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<sup>194</sup> *CMS Intelligencer 1911*, p. 524-525.

<sup>195</sup> "Believe me, it is a huge change. A few years ago no one would have moved a finger- why should they? When a man is born poor or blind, or when misfortune overtakes him, he is only suffering for the misdeeds of a former life, and why should any one else interfere to prevent God giving a man his just reward? Slowly, however, the Christian ideal is permeating India- you see it everywhere." *CMS Intelligencer 1909*, 151.

<sup>196</sup> For example, Watt wrote that "north Indian social service and associational initiatives in the early twentieth century drew on dynamic and deep-rooted 'living traditions' while also being influenced by contemporary Indian social concerns and global developments in the realms of organized philanthropy and civics. The influence of Western colonial modernity and its discourses is not denied, but it is seen as one of many influences." Carey Anthony Watt, *Serving the Nation: Cultures of Service, Association, and Citizenship in Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 13.

<sup>197</sup> Jones, *Socio-religious Reform Movements*, 43-44.

<sup>198</sup> *CMS Intelligencer 1892*, 331.

visions of God with those of characters from Christianity. He says that Christ called this God “Father,” St. Paul called God “Christ,” and Ramakrishna called God “Mother.”<sup>199</sup> This was intentional. He made it clear that he believed everyone was talking about the same God, just by different names. This idea of Ramakrishna as a Christ-figure was taken even further in the teaching that Ramakrishna was equally in touch with God, but was even more legitimate in that his followers didn’t have two millennia to invent stories about him and cloud his message. He was under the scrutiny of the modern world, as Swami Nikhilananda wrote, his words were “the first directly recorded words, in the spiritual history of the world, of a man recognized as belonging to the class of Buddha and Christ.”<sup>200</sup>

Vivekananda’s treatment of the person of Jesus reveals a key difference between the Arya Samaj and a very Hindu understanding of the nature of the Godhead. The Brahmo Samaj didn’t believe in the divinity of anybody, the Arya Samaj didn’t believe in the divinity of Jesus whilst the Ramakrishna Math and Mission taught the divinity of everybody. Like those in mission schools who loosely considered the person of Jesus to be an example of self-sacrifice and wise teaching, the Ramakrishna Mission found worthwhile wisdom in the Gospels. Vivekananda went further and taught that Jesus was an incarnation of God, every bit as divine as the Christians taught. Yet, he does not believe Jesus to hold any exclusive claim on this divinity. It is central to his message that this level of union with God was not exclusive to any one person or time.

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<sup>199</sup> D.S. Sarma, “The Experience of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa” *The Journal of Religion* 7 no. 2 (1927), 190.

<sup>200</sup> Carl E. Purinton, Review of *Ramakrishna: Prophet of India* by Swami Nikhilananda *Journal of Bible and Religion* 17 no. 1 (1949), 68.

To Vivekananda, this union between humankind and the Divine left no room for distinction. It was staunchly monist (*advaita*). Once freed from the material world, personality and individuality would be entirely lost. “Salvation,” then, was nothing like the Christian idea of existing as an individual forever, it was the opposite, ceasing to exist as a person at all. In a speech given at Harvard in 1896, he explains to his audience his “non-dualistic or Advaita” view, which he sees as evolving out of the “dualistic or Dwaita” view. To Vivekananda, every creature was endowed with a bit of the Godhead and the ultimate goal is freedom or *moksha*, the liberation of the soul. This came from his days spent with Ramakrishna and his immediate disciples who were on a quest to escape the cycle of rebirth. Ramakrishna most likely knew very little about the larger world, about life outside of his immediate area, and so, his “easy-going tolerance,” like that of any isolated Hindu, should not be mistaken for a more nuanced universalism. However, he certainly did see the value in using any useful techniques to reach a level of understanding with his one, universal, god.

Vivekananda’s ideas of sin differed from the Arya Samaj in that Aryas who interacted with missionaries explained that through strict adherence to a moral code they could sort of outgrow ‘sin’ and actually remove it from themselves. Vivekananda, however, taught that what we consider ‘evil’ is not necessarily actually ‘bad.’ For example, a man might run away from a tiger, but the tiger could not be evil, as it is part of the same God.<sup>201</sup> Sarma quoted Ramakrishna as saying, “Evil exists in God as poison in a serpent. What is poison to us is no poison to the serpent, but a natural secretion. The

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<sup>201</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *The Vedanta Philosophy: An Address Before the Graduate Philosophical Society of Harvard University, March 25, 1896* (New York: The Vedanta Society, 1901), 18.

serpent does not die of its own secretion.”<sup>202</sup> This contributes to his view of man, which was much different from the missionary view. Like Hindus who lived with missionaries and never understood the idea of the “Fall” that the missionaries taught, the idea of the Fall does not fit with the religious teaching of either the Arya Samaj or the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. The Arya Samaj regularly heckled the missionaries for holding such a belief, whereas Vivekananda taught that we are bound to the material world, but that an explanation is neither available nor logical.

Yet Vivekananda also broke from the Western template of religion in teaching that doctrine not essential to “religion,” but only important as a tool towards an understanding of God. The idea that nothing is important but the contemplation of God, is clear in what we know of the teaching of Ramakrishna. Vivekananda, like Ramakrishna, always taught that the vision of God is all anyone can hope for. However, he broke from his teacher in instructing others that social and charitable service can free the soul. This can be seen as early as Ramakrishna’s deathbed, when Vivekananda told the boys to clean rather than dance. He maintains the Indian idea that what you “believe” is not nearly as important as your seeking after the vision of God. In fact, one of the Hindus the missionaries encountered, who spoke continuously praised and quoted Vivekananda, never abandoned his desire to eat and drink the right things.<sup>203</sup> When Vivekananda came to the Chicago to tell Christians to continue being Christians, it seems he was talking to his own people, telling them to keep being Hindus. Clearly, this “religious” doctrine was not taken from the CMS missionaries, who held that salvation was ultimately a matter of believing the right thing. In fact, George Ensor wrote an article in the 1893 *CMS*

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<sup>202</sup> Sarma, “The Experience of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa,” 202.

<sup>203</sup> BUL, Rev. E. P. Herbert, Annual Letters, 1897, p. 373.

*Intelligencer* in which he appeared outraged that someone would suggest that Christians came from any tradition of “tolerance.” His article was in response to Max Muller’s “Anthropological Religion” in which, according to Ensor, there were plenty of “powerful arguments” in Christianity’s defense, but that they must be disavowed for Muller’s assertion that “tolerance” was “inherent in the nature of the Christian faith.” According to Ensor, there was “no such tolerance in the Church’s creed.” He went on to colorfully describe, beginning with the Jewish characters of the Old Testament who were promised by God, that the defense of intolerance was an “expression of the highest principle of righteousness.”<sup>204</sup> Clearly, Vivekananda’s ‘tolerance’ may have looked similar to Fulfillment Theology, but it was not something he learned from interactions with the missionaries. His teaching seemed to have more in common with the Hindu woman who told Miss Worthington that she did not understand why she should convert, saying, “Miss Sahib, your religion is good for us and our religion is good for us.”<sup>205</sup>

Vivekananda portrayed India as much more religious than the West, especially the United States and even defends caste as being a better social structure than what he termed the modern scramble for “bags of dollars” in the US.<sup>206</sup> Though concerned for the place of India in the future world, he was clearly not threatened by what he sees as “Western” religions, by which he meant Christianity. He saw the West as giving the world the means to spread information, but with little information to actually spread. In teaching that the contemplation of God is the most important, he pointed out how little time was usually spent on the task. Interestingly, missionary letters and Vivekananda’s speeches reveal that both sides criticized the other for the same thing. Vivekananda tells

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<sup>204</sup> *CMS Intelligencer* 1893,491.

<sup>205</sup> BUL, Miss E. Worthington, Annual Letters, 1903, p. 437.

<sup>206</sup> Vivekananda, *The Vedanta Philosophy*, 26.

people that in America, everyone knew the system of government, but knew nothing of religion except that they “go to church.” In India, he claimed, people know much about religion, and with respect to the government, simply say, “I pay taxes.”<sup>207</sup> Like many of his time, he continually claimed that the world was made up of the spiritual East and the material West. As one missionary pointed out, this was a flawed statement, clearly, since India has nothing to compare with the thousands of college graduates who dedicate themselves to lives of hardship and disease for the cause of their god. Missionaries often made quite the opposite point. For example, H.B. Durrant wrote that he thought India was going to be vicious opponents of Christianity, or “hungry and unsatisfied seekers after truth,” but was disappointed to find that, like English college students, “the prevailing attitude is one of comparative indifference to religious matters altogether.”<sup>208</sup>

A close reading of his surviving words reveals that while Vivekananda maintained many traditionally Hindu conceptions of the world, perhaps even more so than the Arya Samaj, he clearly made good use of the missionary template and missionary methods of religion. The Ramakrishna Mission was certainly a part of the growing ‘religiousness’ of Hinduism, but Vivekananda was able to evade many of the parameters set by Christians in India.

## **5. Conclusion**

The paper has attempted to characterize the encounter between CMS missionaries and the Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna Mission in north India. It has attempted to

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<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.* 16.

<sup>208</sup> BUL, Rev. H. B. Durrant, Annual Letters, 1911, p. 149.

demonstrate that, though missionaries held the upper hand in these interactions and largely set the parameters of debate, Indians did not take on new concepts or ideas without first molding them and fitting them into a larger Indian tradition. In many instances, missionaries and Indians were not even really exchanging ideas. Their conceptions of the nature of the Godhead, of sin and salvation were often too different to allow for real, substantial dialogue.

Since CMS missionaries were fearful of baptizing someone only to have him leave shortly thereafter, they never wavered on their insistence that each catechumen be a “Christian at heart” before baptism. This meant that missionaries had countless rich conversations with these Indians. And a close reading of these letters suggests that, on occasion, missionaries and Hindus were able to connect on certain issues, sometimes worshipping the same deity: the person of Jesus. However, in many other instances, they missed each other entirely.

This paper also found that Indians under British rule did not mindlessly mimic foreign ideas. Even when they adopted missionary templates and forms of religion, Indians fit them into a traditionally Indian understanding. When Dayananda invented a conversion ritual along the lines of baptism, it was colored with notions of caste and group identity much more so than a personal act of faith. When Ramakrishna taught contemplation of the Divine, he did so in a way that still held to the idea that the soul of each man and the soul of God were one in the same. And neither group ever accepted the missionary idea that an act of “faith” could lead to any sort of salvation. Even the Ramakrishna Mission, in teaching that the “knowledge” or “vision” of God was the end goal of every faith, never taught that it could be achieved by an act of mere belief.

On both sides, men wrestled with their notions of God, themselves and the larger world. The teachings of Vivekananda do admittedly look strikingly similar to Fulfillment Theology. But this does not mean it was mimicry. In meeting the larger world, and startlingly different groups of people, both missionaries and the “first Hindu missionary” wrote the entire human race characters in a much larger story. For the missionaries, all Hindu teachings pointed to the need for Jesus, in much the same way as the Old Testament. In Vivekananda’s teaching, all religions served as stepping stones to something larger- the vision of God. Much like the missionaries painted their own faces into the stories of their only sacred text, Vivekananda taught that the experience of God was not limited to any one time or place, but was available to all. Unlike the Arya Samaj, who had tried to defend their faith by proving that Jesus was not an incarnation, the Ramakrishna Mission held that Jesus was an incarnation, as was Ramakrishna himself, along with a potentially infinite number of God-conscious people.

It is interesting to note that both the CMS missionaries and members of the Ramakrishna Mission teach a personal, loving relationship with God. This message seems to be related to each groups’ harshest criticism of the other. In missionary descriptions, the Hindu was largely painted as “irreligious”<sup>209</sup> or worshippers of only “power,” whether natural, supernatural or man-made. Vivekananda described the “West” in the same way, as a society more concerned with inventing and reinventing ways to disseminate more information faster, but completely unconcerned with having any worthy information to send. To Vivekananda, it was the “West” that was irreligious. It

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<sup>209</sup> For example, Miss Luce wrote in 1897 that that “their mental and spiritual capacity (one might almost say spiritual consciousness) has remained dormant for so long that it seems next to impossible to get them to realize that there is, or can be, anything in this life beyond doing your daily work, eating and sleeping.” BUL, Miss E. A. Luce, Annual Letters, 1897, p. 120.

seems the interaction between these groups contributed to the larger conversation of what religion is, of what is sacred and what is profane. Initially, Indians told the missionaries their “charity” was not holy work, but, ironically, an Englishman’s sense of duty. Similarly, CMS missionaries could not decide if caste was a social institution or a religious one. After staring at one another quizzically, reading one another’s sacred text, engaging in conversation, they increasingly seem to answer the question of what is sacred with, simply, everything. To the missionary, the most menial task is made holy by the Incarnation, and to Vivekananda, any task, from football to building railroads could be sacred in as much as it could lead to each man’s realization of his own holiness. From here, it was clear that CMS missionaries and Aryas and Ramakrishnas could achieve precious little in the way of genuine dialogue.

Ultimately, this paper has suggested that CMS missionaries and Hindus of north India approached one another with strikingly different views of the Godhead, sin and salvation. These different conceptualizations of the world made it difficult for real religious dialogue to take place. Though they interacted regularly, in conversation they often missed one another entirely. They were, in some instances, able to connect for a moment. The Arya Samaj and the Ramakrishna Math and Mission show that Indians did not take Christianity and color it with Hindu characters. They may have borrowed missionary forms of religion, methods of proselytization and conversion, and even the very idea of going abroad, but they always worked as part of a larger Indian tradition, maintaining Hindu conceptions of the Godhead, sin and salvation. Concerning questions of the developing ‘religiousness’ of Hinduism, it seems that while these two groups did take on CMS missionary forms of religion, such as the reinvention of *shuddi* or the use of

pamphlets, they maintained traditionally Hindu concepts of the Godhead, salvation and sin.

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