RESISTANCE IN EDUCATION:
A Symptom Of The Misconstrued Orient

Protestant Missionary Education in Late Nineteenth-Century India

"Give the Hindu an education large as known truth…and then that mind of his will spread a broad wing, and take a bold flight in the upper regions of intellect."[1]
—John Murdoch, *Indian Missionary Manual*

Introduction

Throughout the colonial period in India, Protestant missionary education endured controversy. During the mid-eighteenth century, the British East India Company's power transformed from a trade monopoly to ruling vast regions of India. This shift occurred quickly in response to the decline of the Mughal Empire and the rivalry of the French East India Company. Instead of aiming to alter native beliefs and customs, the company wanted Indian subjects to remain loyal and obedient. The East India Company thus persistently maintained a stance of religious neutrality, and forbade missionaries from promoting Christianity and evangelizing natives. Despite these early efforts, the renewed charter of the East India Company in 1813 granted missionaries greater freedom to fulfill their aims of converting Indian peoples to Christianity, while also delegating the company the additional task of supporting native education. These changes sought to demonstrate that Britain's presence in India was not solely for its own economic development, but to catalyze native moral advancement. While British government school administrators refused to deviate from their stance of religious education and continued to ban Christian teaching in government schools, the company started to extend a small amount of support for missionary actions and relaxed restrictions concerning where missionaries could operate.[2]

The Indian Mutiny in 1857 marked a turning point for British missionaries; its outcome simultaneously cleared the way to institutionalize missionary educational efforts, and demonstrated the controversial position of Western education in the eyes of the British elite. While numerous deep-rooted tensions catalyzed the revolt, historians have provided two arguments about the affront to Indian religion and culture as its primary cause. Historians Barbara Metcalfe and Thomas Metcalfe identify the Lee Enfield rifle as the revolt's immediate cause. Loading the rifles required soldiers to bite off the end of the cartridge, which were known to be smeared with pig or cow grease. When Indian soldiers refused to fire the rifles, as Hindus and Muslims do not consume cow and pig for religious reasons, they were publicly shamed and fired from the military. This affront to the religious and cultural traditions of Hindus and Muslims created an atmosphere of unrest and indignation in the army and ulti-

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1   John Murdoch, comp., *Indian Missionary Manual: Hints to Young Missionaries in India*, 3rd ed. (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1889), 105.

2   Sanjay Seth, "Which Good Book? Missionary Education and Conversion in Colonial India," Semeia, last modified 2001, http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A82670862/AONE?u=nysl_ce_hamilton&sid=AONE&xid=7e394379.

mately catalyzed the revolt.[3] On the other hand, historian Parimala V. Rao claims that another factor leading to the mutiny was the nature of English education in India. Rao details the perspective of George Russell Clerk, a British civil servant who claimed that English education in India was the sole cause of the revolt. In March 1858, Clerk presented a memorandum that outlined the "real position of education in India," pointing to the cultural clashes and difficulties of English education as key resentments among the Indian population.[4] The reaction of the President of the Board of Control Lord Ellenborough in favor of Clerk's memorandum indicates the high degree of controversy over education.[5] Regardless of its impetus, the Mutiny in turn spurred a critically important outcome: the cessation of the East India Company's rule and the beginning of the British Crown's sovereignty in 1858. Although Queen Victoria promised the protection and respect of native religions, this transition allowed missionaries to pave the way towards institutionalizing Christian teaching.[6]

To recognize the significance of the mutiny in 1857, members of four prominent British evangelical missionary societies—the Baptist Missionary Society, the Church Missionary Society, the London Missionary Society, and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society— established the Christian Vernacular Education Society for India in 1858.[7] An 1885 article published by *The Missionary Herald* notes that the creation of the society was an "expression of English sentiment that the government methods of education in India, by which all religious instruction was debarred from public schools and a formal neutrality maintained, were a mistake."[8] The article denoted a sense of urgency for effective teaching methods, and for enhanced conversion strategies. The society thus focused their efforts on training native teachers how to teach students about Christianity, and creating textbooks that teach English in tandem with Christian teachings.

The founder of the Christian Vernacular Education Society was John Murdoch, a leading Scottish missionary in India.[9] In 1889, Murdoch published the third edition of his *Indian Missionary Manual: Hints to Young Missionaries in India,* a compilation and examination of quotes from experienced missionaries stationed throughout South and Southeast Asia, written specifically to guide other missionaries. The purpose of the text, explicitly stated in its preface, is to identify flawed missionary strategies and propose potential improvements. In this most recent edition of the manual, Murdoch added information from several Missionary Conference Reports, and drew heavily from what Murdoch referred to as a "Special Report" that examines the position and question of missionary education.

Though his careful selection and evaluation of quotes, Murdoch explains the complexities of reforming methods for conversion, and reveals the shift towards religious accommodation during the mid-nineteenth century. By examining Murdoch's sections on education and a 'study of the people,' this essay aims to encapsulate the causes of discord and the nature of resistance in missionary schools in India during the late nineteenth century. Mur-

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3   Barbara D. Metcalf and Thomas R. Metcalf, "Revolt, the Modern State, and Colonized Subjects, 1848-1885," in *A Concise History of Modern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 101.

4   Parimala V. Rao, "Modern Education and the Revolt of 1857 in India," *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education* 52, no. 1 (2016): 27.

5   Rao, "Modern Education," 29.

6   Seth, "Which Good," Semeia.

7   "Christian Literature Society for India," Archives Hub, https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/583e987e-a5d0-3f45-bde9-499e4450d435?component=bad4e963-d847-396f-a5cb-44400a1b7a37.

8   "The Christian Vernacular Education Society for India," *The Missionary Herald, Containing the Proceedings of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1821-1906)* 81, no. 7 (July 1, 1885): 268.

9   Parna Sengupta, "A Curriculum for Religion," in *Pedagogy for Religion: Missionary Education and the Fashioning of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2011), 42.

doch's *Indian Missionary Manual* provides a lens to comprehend prominent issues and confirms missionary awareness—or lack thereof—regarding misinterpretations of and about the natives and their relationship to Christianity. In the eyes of many members of British missionary societies, missionary educational efforts were complicated by two forms of resistance by the late nineteenth century: native students exploiting mission schools, and teachers accommodating the trajectory and teaching methods at mission schools. This essay argues that, despite Murdoch's claims, these forms of resistance were not the cause of complications in missionary education. Rather, they were a symptom of the deep-rooted misconceptions held by British missionaries about Indian people and society, as well as an outcome of the presumption that missionary education shared the same symbolic significance in both societies.

Homi K. Bhabha's article "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi," provides a framework to comprehend missionary attitudes towards resistance in education, and to locate the agency and ambiguous role of various actors within the missionary education system. Robert Young's article "The Ambivalence of Bhabha" further provides supplementary explanations on Bhabha's key terminology, including mimicry and hybridity. This essay also uses Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* as a framework to analyze the Western construction of knowledge about Indian people and religions, and to outline the fundamental misconceptions and key issues in missionary education.[10]

Resistance in Education

Before examining the nature of resistance in missionary education, it is crucial to first acknowledge the aims and significance of missionary education in India for evangelical British missionary societies. In Murdoch's *Indian Missionary Manual,* the original aims of higher education were stated:

> To bring the Gospel to bear on a class of the community not easily reached in any other way.
> As a direct agency for the conversion of souls.
> To train efficient Native Agents to assist in spreading the Gospel.[11]

After 1855, it became increasingly apparent that strategies employed by missionaries in the early nineteenth century were no longer effective.[12] After education overtook preaching as the favored strategy for missionaries in 1872, John Murdoch notes that "probably no question connected with Missions has been more discussed than the place which education should occupy."[13] Murdoch's observation is even more salient in the context of Indian education. Preaching had the same goal of evangelizing Indians, whereas education was a means for molding the minds of natives to further promote Christianity in India. Evangelical Protestant belief was defined by a trust in 'conversionism,'[14] devotion to the Bible, and particularly, the notion that the act of reading was critically interconnected with constructing the

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10   While there are many religions practiced in India, this essay will primarily focus on Hinduism.

11   Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 459.

12   Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 459-460.

13   Robert E. Frykenberg, ed., *Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross-Cultural Communication since 1500.* Studies in the History of Christian Missions (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 272; Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 437.

14   This term is defined by historian Geoffrey A. Oddie as the belief that lives need to be changed.

Christian identity.[15] The latter notion involved prior steps of teaching students how to read, which meant that vernacular schools and English schools were crucial elements for fulfilling the primary missionary objectives.

Recognizing the necessity of reforms by the late nineteenth century, many missionaries felt that they had no choice but to compromise and adopt an approach of accommodation to realize their aims. Murdoch notes with disappointment that many missionaries began to regard "the number of converts from Missionary Colleges [as] *wholly irrelevant*."[16] Many missionary societies, however, were reluctant to let go of the original design of education laid out in the early nineteenth century, and attributed recent failures to the "neglect of teaching."[17]

John Murdoch embodies the latter stance through the way in which he structures the education section of his missionary manual. After Murdoch points to the declining rate of baptisms in India to explain why he believes that traditional missionary tactics of conversion were ineffective, he evaluates the practicality of suggested reforms to the education system. The chapter's central focus on conversion indicates the controversy of its significance, as well as the difficulty for its success. Murdoch concludes his section on reforms by quoting Rev. J. A. Sharrock from the Special Report, stating "the mission colleges and schools should not be abolished, but should be made more distinctively *evangelizing agencies,* teaching Christianity boldly in spite of all adverse circumstances."[18] Murdoch insists that the schools need to intensify missionary practices, and reform teaching methods rather than missionary aims.

Exploitation as Resistance

Historian Hayden Bellenoit's article "Missionary Education, Religion and Knowledge in India, c.1880-1915" effectively supports Bhabha's framework of an ambiguous power dynamic in missionary education. Bellenoit demonstrates that Indians were neither "passive bystanders" nor "victims of epistemological hegemony," because their actions—calculated or subconscious— reinforced the limited success of missionaries in education, and impacted future educational reforms.[19]

The incentive for Indian students to attend missionary schools for educational benefits without becoming converted to Christianity prompted a series of methodological reforms. While many parents were attracted to the moral and ethical lessons their children would learn from religious teaching at Mission Schools, "when there [was] a chance of their boys becoming Christian they [threw] morality to the winds."[20] Most Indians attended mission schools for the practical reasons of social mobility and securing a well-paying career; passing examinations, thus, was the main priority for Indian students at mission schools. John Murdoch's *Indian Missionary Manual* demonstrates that missionaries were well aware, and very concerned, about native students exploiting missionary schools for their own financial benefit. Murdoch notes that natives saw an academic degree as "a certain passport to honor, wealth,

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15   Geoffrey A. Oddie, *Imagined Hinduism: British Protestant Missionary Constructions of Hinduism, 1793-1900* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006), 17.

16   Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 461.

17   Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 486.

18   Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 472.

19   Bellenoit, "Missionary Education," 374-5.

20   Bellenoit, "Missionary Education," 372.

and office" and that "education was valued simply as a means of obtaining that end."[21] Missionary teachers were also aware of students directly exploiting the mission school system; one Hindu student told his teacher that he would pray to Jesus in class, "but only so that he could pass his examinations and purchase a bare mayan (large house)."[22]

Another issue for missionaries was that Christian theology was not tested in examinations. In his *Indian Missionary Manual,* Murdoch compiles several quotes from missionaries, each denoting signs of uneasiness. Rev. Dr. Ogilvie explains that native students regarded the time spent in class learning about the Bible as a complete waste of time because it was excluded from examinations, and receiving good grades was "the only purpose they have in view."[23] Rev. W. A. Liston seconds this concern, noting that students saw Bible reading as "a necessary evil to be submitted to," as it did not help them prepare for examinations. The reluctant and resentful attitude of the students towards Christian ideology further intensified the concern about the reduced effectiveness of conversion attempts.

The need to compromise educational strategies grew increasingly dire. While missionary teachers prompted religious debates and discussions for students to voice their opinions, students were given even more space to explain their beliefs and exploit the missionary education system. These debates primarily revolved around discussing similarities between Hinduism and Christianity, as well as explaining proof of Christian superiority. During these discussions, many students challenged the outcome of converting to Christianity. In one instance, a student from St. John's quoted a Gospel verse 'he who is not against us is for us,' to challenge why missionaries insisted on converting students, even when they accepted the essence of Christian morality. Another student criticized the European staff at his high school, stating that they did not share the fraternal love they preached about in class.[24] On a similar note, native students doubted the substantial difference between the lessons of Christianity in comparison to Hinduism. A student from St. Stephen's mentioned to his teacher he found "exactly the same teaching" from the Bible as he did from the Vedas.[25]

In "Signs Taken For Wonders," Bhabha's symbol of the English Book, which he uses to explore a few instances of the facade and breakdown of colonial authority, is useful to identify the dislocation of colonial authority in missionary education. A strong example of the English Book depicts catechist Anund Messeh encountering questions from Indian natives about the Bible; while Anund Messeh assumes the authority of the text, the natives question the text's validity and search for a different cultural authority.[26] The example reiterates that the English book gains its meaning *after* the encounter of cultural difference, and consequently, the repeated yet differing interpretation of the Book emphasizes that the colonial presence is always ambivalent.[27] In the case of Indian students within the missionary education system, student interpretations of Christianity were distorted when they challenged the authority of the colonial power. Students effectively took frameworks and moral lessons from Christian theology and used them against missionaries to prove them wrong. This direct affront to missionary aims intensified the need for drastic educational reform, and to the dismay of many missionary societies, prompted teachers to use a method of accommodation as

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21 Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 464.

22 Bellenoit, "Missionary Education," 387.

23 Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 465.

24 Bellenoit, "Missionary Education," 377.

25 Bellenoit, "Missionary Education," 378.

26 Homi K. Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (October 1, 1985): 164-5.

27 Bhabha, "Signs Taken," 169.

an attempt to resolve these issues.

Accommodation as Resistance

Murdoch's arguments against the teacher's accommodation of missionary education is examined and explained through Homi K. Bhabha's article "Signs Taken for Wonders." The colonial presence is always riddled with an ambivalence, Bhabha argues, which opens up a space for resistance and deconstructs the dynamic of colonial power. Bhabha constructs his analysis of colonial ambivalence by defining and exploring hybridization, which, according to his article, reflects the disarticulation of the original authoritative symbol by repetition and combination with colonial difference. Robert Young's explanation of Bhabha's term for the hybrid is something or someone that "articulates colonial and native knowledges and can enable active forms of resistance."[28] This definition emphasizes the strategic and involved role of the hybrid in deconstructing the dynamic of colonial power. Mimicry is a closely related term used by Bhabha in his article "Of Mimicry and Man," yet the "mimic man" and the "hybrid" have varying degrees of consciousness regarding their resistance. The mimic man as explained by Robert Young is an "unconscious agent of menace, with a resulting paranoia on the part of the colonizer as he tries to guess the native's sinister intentions."[29] These terms will be used to locate the agency of the missionary teacher, and the non-Christian native teacher. There are many other ambiguous figures within the missionary education system, including native Christians, educated natives, and female native students, but this essay does not thoroughly explore them through Bhabha's framework.

The Non-Christian Native Teacher

After examining the *Indian Missionary Manual*'s section on education, it is evident that Murdoch identifies the non-Christian native teacher as the mimic man within the realm of missionary education. While the mimic man indeed poses a threat to the colonizer, according to Bhabha, he is mostly unaware of his own agency and resistance. Young explains that the greatest danger of the mimic man is that he reflects back to the colonizer a warped image of himself, whose similarity is too unsettling for the colonizer to trust.[30] This concept of the colonizer's discomfort of sameness can be seen in Murdoch's insecurities and his opinion of non-Christian natives. According to Murdoch, the non-Christian native teacher is not only unable to successfully fulfill the aims of missionary education, but also poses a danger to the education system through their accommodation to Hindu students. In this case, the non-Christian native teacher is the mimic man. He reflects the image of the missionary teacher who is *actively* accommodating religious teaching to the students. Within the suggestions for education section, Murdoch notes that replacing non-Christian teachers with trained Christian teachers "is one of the most urgent reforms needed in Indian Missionary education."[31] The fact that Murdoch discussed this reform for up to eight pages demonstrates the urgency of thoroughly informing younger missionaries on the unpredictability and complexity of the non-Christian native.

Missionary societies could not financially afford to eliminate all non-Christian teachers

28   Robert Young, "The Ambivalence of Bhabha," in *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990), 148.

29   Young, "The Ambivalence," 147.

30   Young, "The Ambivalence," 147.

31   Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 482.

and replace them with the type of teachers who could fulfill original missionary objectives.[32] Murdoch insists that the religious demographic of teachers posed a major obstacle to achieving missionary aims, pointing to the rising number of non-Christian teachers. While Christian teachers increased from 47% in 1871 to 61% in 1881, Murdoch notes that these numbers are reflected in vernacular schools, not English schools; additionally, while the percentage of non-Christian teachers decreased, "the *number* employed is greater than ever."[33] Murdoch's frustration also partly emerged from missionaries making excuses for the non-Christian native teacher, stating, "apologies are made for it as a necessity, while the means to remedy the evil are, in many cases, neglected."[34]

Murdoch cites two claims made by missionaries to argue that non-Christian native teachers do not only steer students away from Christianity, but their undeserved authority as a teacher is enough to damage the entire missionary education system. Murdoch openly disagrees with the claim of an anonymous missionary who believes that 'Heathen teachers,' regardless of their mistakes, are able to guide students in a general direction towards Christianity:

"I can imagine many a Hindu teacher in a Mission school asked by a Hindu boy there whether Christ's teaching was good, saying Yes, and 'Was idolatry wrong' saying Yes; and yet if the boy said to him, 'Shall I become a Christian?' saying No. But if that happened I should say that under the circumstances the teacher had done much to help the boy on his way to Christ, and that the negative answer could not be construed as disloyalty to the institution he served."[35]

Murdoch rejects this claim by stating that this "argument in their favor will scarcely be considered satisfactory," because he sees this as a dangerous action which enables the mimic man to alter Christian education.[36] Instead, Murdoch insists that no actions can go ignored, and epitomizes missionary skepticism of the native non-Christian teacher, when stating, "there is such a gulf between the Christian European and the Hindu, that the former can never be certain of the real sentiments of the latter."[37] Murdoch also quotes Rev. E. P. Hastings from the Bangalore Conference, when he states:

"The influence of native teachers, if they are able men, upon their students is very great. They are in much closer sympathy with them than it is possible for foreigners to be. A word or a look from a heathen teacher may successfully neutralize the Christian teaching and influence of a foreign professor or principal when there is no apparent opposition."[38]

Murdoch supports this claim by stating that the example set by non-Christian native teachers is enough to steer students away from Christianity; if the mimic man believes something different from what he says, the students will follow suit, as "Hindus are far more led

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32   Hayden J. A. Bellenoit, "Missionary Education, Religion and Knowledge in India, c.1880-1915," *Modern Asian Studies* 41, no. 2 (March 1, 2007): 386.
33   Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 482-3.
34   Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 486.
35   Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 484.
36   Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 484.
37   Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 484.
38   Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 484-5.

by example than by argument."[39] Using this misperception, Murdoch claims that reform needs to be targeted at training native teachers more effectively, but concludes that the mimic man ultimately needs to be eliminated. As an Indian convert pointed out, "it goes without saying that a mission school where almost all of the lecturers are [either Muslim or Hindu] cannot fulfill its chief object."[40]

The Missionary Teacher

Murdoch's criticism of the missionary teacher's decision to accommodate education aligns directly with Bhabha's explanation of hybridity. According to Bhabha, the hybrid uses their advantage of mixed knowledge to counter the colonial dynamic of power. While missionary teachers did not actively try to undermine the balance of colonial power, they consciously altered and eliminated strategies of missionary education that existed for the purpose of fulfilling missionary aims. Evident in Murdoch's *Indian Missionary Manual,* many missionaries realized the positive effects and power of sympathy towards the natives. In 1888, the Church Missionary Committee stated "the Committee have been interested and impressed with, and attach importance to, some things that have recently been said regarding *sympathetic dealing with the heathen*," referring to a missionary's deportment.[41] While Rev. G. H Rouse from Calcutta identifies sympathy and love as "qualifications for Missionary work," many missionaries were careful to define sympathy as a tactic to win the trust of native students, not as a way to abandon original missionary objectives.[42] Most missionaries agreed, for example, to allow Indian students to stay home from school on native holidays. While this extension of religious tolerance seemed to encourage idolatry, it did not pose a direct threat to the original aims of missionary education, and no student would show up regardless.[43]

This essay's previous section on exploitation as resistance explored the number of challenges posed by native students. Missionary teachers embraced their own hybridity, and appealed to native needs to maximize missionary efforts. Missionary teachers understood that native students prioritized passing examinations and entirely disregarded Christian teachings that were not tested. In response, some missionary teachers made attendance for religious classes non-compulsory, rather than insisting on its inherent value to mission schools. Murdoch quotes Rev. K. S. Macdonald, who explains that the result of this decision was largely unsuccessful, as "attendance dwindled away till the benches were almost empty."[44]

The most important issue pertaining to the missionary teacher's accommodation, however, was conversion. As one of the main goals of higher education in India, converting students to Christianity was not something missionary societies were willing to compromise on. In his article "Missionary Education, Religion and Knowledge in India, c.1880-1915," Bellenoit depicts the disastrous consequences of conversions at mission schools, and ultimately demonstrates how conversions "did more to hurt schools than help them."[45] The display of hostility that arose after a Brahmin student converted at Ramsay College in 1891, Bellenoit explains, prompted the school's headmaster to reconsider the benefits of conversion; while

39　Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 485.

40　Bellenoit, "Missionary Education," 386.

41　Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 476-7.

42　Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 476.

43　Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 458.

44　Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 466.

45　Bellenoit, "Missionary Education," 372.

he prayed for conversion, he noted that they would continue to "empty our classrooms."[46]

Missionary teachers began to question whether conversions were practical or even beneficial; a missionary told Murdoch that conversions "did more harm than good causing ill feeling towards the teachers."[47] Murdoch identifies this doubt of conversion as one of the main reasons for why the number of baptisms dwindled during the late nineteenth century. Missionary teachers were more successful converting students in the early nineteenth century, Murdoch states, because "conversions were earnestly sought and expected."[48] Murdoch's perspective emphasizes that a strong faith in the Word of God and a desire for students to convert will not only lead to success, but will also highlight the capability of the missionary teacher.

Murdoch further reinforces the perspective held by many British Protestant missionaries: conversions should not be compromised in the name of accommodation. In fact, many missionaries quoted in Murdoch's *Indian Missionary Manual* maintain that a decreased number of conversions is preferable, as the quality of courses and students "would be more valuable from a Christian standpoint."[49] Rev. R. Wardlaw Thompson claims that the disturbance caused by conversion is beneficial, stating "the numbers in attendance might suffer; though I doubt if that would long to be the case; but the moral influence upon the population would be very great."[50] While Murdoch notes his disapproval of the hybrid accommodating towards native needs, he fully supports altering educational methods in favor of conversion; he advises the missionary teacher, "say as much as you please to a Hindu in favor of Christianity, provided you do not *pointedly* show that it condemns his own conduct."[51]

Caste and Conversion: Discords in Education

For British Protestant missionaries, conversion represented the most important contribution towards fulfilling missionary aims and also demonstrated the progress of promoting Christianity. Indian students, however, typically did not attend mission schools to fulfill a desire to convert. Even if students eventually decided to convert, their decision was often based on reasons related to social benefits that did not align with Christianity ideology. While British Protestant missionaries established mission schools to fulfill their own aim of converting Indians to Christianity, they also sought to dismantle and challenge the caste system.[52] Many missionaries believed that the caste system was one of the many practices that defined Hinduism, and thus, maintained that caste "deserves careful study," in their construction of knowledge on the native people.[53] Caste was seen as the primary obstacle to Christian conversion, because individuals were bound to both their families and larger communities.[54] Failure to tolerate or understand the inner workings of the caste system was one of the most significant deep-rooted discords in missionary education, and largely contributed to its limitations.

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46 Bellenoit, "Missionary Education," 372-3.

47 Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 463.

48 Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 462.

49 Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 463.

50 Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 464.

51 Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 477.

52 Parna Sengupta, "The Molding of Native Character," in *Pedagogy for Religion: Missionary Education and the Fashioning of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2011), 27.

53 Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 101.

54 Sengupta, "The Molding," 26-7.

In Edward Said's *Orientalism,* Said explains the meaning and construction of the concept of Orientalism in the West. Said divides orientalism into four different meanings. This essay uses orientalism's most general meaning as a framework to demonstrate how British missionaries based their knowledge of India on what they saw as fundamental differences from their own society. According to Said, orientalism is "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident.'"[55] I am aware that this essay's focus on caste as a point of difference inevitably falls into the problem of the larger framework of orientalism, yet this section aims to demonstrate why British Protestant missionaries were so concerned about caste and how, due to missionary generalizations of and suspicion towards caste, their efforts to eliminate it failed.

In the *Indian Missionary Manual's* section on 'Study of the People,' Murdoch deconstructs the character of the Hindus, and confirms Said's statement that "Orientals were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined…"[56] In Murdoch's eyes, due to the Hindu's attachment to custom, "caste has far more influence over the people than anything else."[57] The caste system stood out as an element completely alien to British society, and was thus seen an obstacle to overcome for converting natives; for missionaries, this meant that mission schools would need to be open to all castes.

Murdoch quotes Rev. E. Storrow, who distinguishes between the 'Englishman' and men in India. The 'Englishman' takes pleasure in saying phrases such as "I shall if I choose" or "I will do as I please," and will do so "just to show his independence."[58] Storrow states that the Indian man, in contrast, "seems disposed to sink his individuality into the general life of the community to which his caste attaches him."[59] Here, the process of constructing the Orient ultimately builds the Occident on epistemological difference. After identifying this mark of difference between the Orient and the Occident, missionaries believed that conversion would only be effective if each caste was included in their educational aims. Murdoch quotes a man named Arthur, who discussed the caste system in relation to converting Hindus, and stated that "a Hindu mind is not dissevered from the system but by the application of vast forces."[60] To the British missionary, the decision to provide education for all castes was common sense as the natives were viewed as one and the same, and British society did not have any system comparable to the caste system. However, to upper-caste native men, the decision to educate all castes felt like an act of discrimination, as literacy was an exclusive right held by higher castes.[61]

The suspicion of the Indian Christian converts in relation to their original caste also significantly limited missionary success at promoting Christianity. Missionaries evaluated the qualities of each convert, and questioned their intentions based on their caste. In his *Indian Missionary Manual,* Murdoch stresses the significance of caste and its lingering feeling within Indian Christian converts, claiming that missionaries who assume caste feelings disappear after conversion are mistaken.[62] Murdoch also emphasizes the significant difference between

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55   Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 2.

56   Said, *Orientalism*, 207.

57   Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 97.

58   Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 99.

59   Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 99.

60   Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 100.

61   Sengupta, "The Molding," 27.

62   Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 429.

the conversion of an upper-caste native and a lower-caste native. According to Murdoch, "Both *may be* equally sincere; but any man of experience will remember that the former has everything to lose, while the latter is placed in a higher position in the social scale."[63]

In his article "The Conversion Experience of India's Christian Elite in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," Antony Copley explains the phenomenon of conversion by examining individual accounts of conversion among the Indian Christian elite. His examples provide further insight about which natives in particular wanted to convert, and his explanations raise important questions including, "were they more alienated from Hinduism…than attracted to Christianity?" and "were they more repelled by Hindu social practice than attracted to the social values of Europeans?"[64] Two of Copley's examples reinforce the different meanings of conversion and its significance for the Indian and the British Protestant missionary. Baba Padmanji, Copley explains, was a native who effectively depicts a typical conversion from Hinduism to Christianity. Padmanji's caste, Copley notes, was inferior to the Brahmin caste and was an "alienating factor" in his life.[65] Interestingly, while he felt that the moral standard set by Hinduism was not high enough, "his Hindu faith remained unshaken," and he did not want to read the New Testament, "on account of the secret antipathy I bore to the name of Christ."[66] Nonetheless, Padmanji converted to ease the personal conflict in his mind. Another convert, Rajagopaul, was deeply influenced by John Anderson, a Scottish church missionary teacher.[67] Rajagopaul seemed to completely transcend the system of his Vellalar caste, and he spoke passionately against elements of Hinduism and idolatry.[68] During the mid-nineteenth century, however, suspicions of missionaries regarding his caste made Rajagopaul feel disillusioned. He stated, "because visible success does not seem to come up to the romantic expectations they formed at home, they are ready to conclude that everything is wrong, that missions are a failure in India."[69] Despite the massive courage it took for many upper-caste Indians to convert, their internal dissatisfaction emphasized the vast difference between British missionary expectations and Indian reality.

Conclusion

Resistance took many forms inside mission school classrooms. Student exploitation of mission schools problematized the purpose of education, which prompted missionary teachers to reform their strategies. Mission schools had no choice but to rely on native non-Christian teachers, despite a lack of trust in their intentions. Accommodation was necessary in the eyes of the both the missionary teacher and the non-Christian native teacher, and whether their efforts were conscious or unconscious, they created a space they believed to be beneficial for both the British missionary society and the Indian student. Each ambiguous role in the missionary education system had a high degree of agency, and ultimately, created complications for missionary societies. However, the difficulties catalyzed by resistance were not the original cause of limited missionary success in education, but an indication or symptom of a deeper issue. Missionary ideas of conversion did not align with those of the natives, and

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63 Murdoch, *Indian Missionary*, 284.

64 Antony Copley, "The Conversion Experience of India's Christian Elite in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of Religious History* 18, no. 1 (June 1994): 55-56.

65 Copley, "The Conversion," 56.

66 Copley, "The Conversion," 57.

67 Copley, "The Conversion," 61.

68 Copley, "The Conversion," 62, 64.

69 Copley, "The Conversion," 65.

often when Indians converted, personal considerations outweighed religious sentiment. The caste system, a distinguished trait of the 'other,' was seen as an obstacle to converting Indians to Christianity. Misconstrued knowledge about Indian people and caste as a characteristic of the Orient simultaneously shaped how missionaries formulated Christian education, and contributed to the difficulties missionaries experienced in India during the late nineteenth century.

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