1. INTRODUCTION

The coming of the Christian Missionaries in India marks the beginning of a historical process of interaction between Christianity and indigenous cultures and traditions. The missionaries had to contend and adjust with the diversified socio-cultural patterns which posed different problems and challenges to them. Missionaries tried to grasp the mechanism determining links and disjunctions between various components of the society and attempted to understand different aspects of indigenous philosophy, tradition, religion, social practices, culture etc. They attempted to locate their understanding within their theological framework and even endeavoured to fashion their theological positions in accordance with the local environment. The missionary activities not only left an impact on the environment, but in turn they themselves could not escape from being influenced by the environment in which they operated.

In the past two centuries, the missionaries have left their imprint on the course of spiritual-theological debates which have had an impact on the socio-cultural terrain. Such debates are part of missionary literature seeking to comprehend Indian situation and debating the contours of proselytizing methodologies. The contents of these writings are representative of their changing interpretations and understandings. Their representation of the indigenous culture and social practices drew response from local intelligentsia which responded in a resistance-acceptance continuum. The nature of the colonial state also determined the scope of missionary activities.

The historical process of the formation of Christian community in India was ingrained in the efforts of the missionaries to create their own presence at intellectual and social plane. The missionary interpretations of
the religion, custom, society and indigenous communities served to enrich
their own understanding about India. They conducted themselves on the
basis of such understanding of the indigenous society. The missionary
understanding was sometime treated as ‘real’ thus forming an idea about
the indigenous communities and perpetuating it at the same time. It has
been often alleged that the missionary understanding thus perpetuated
imputed a kind of ‘dogmatism’ to the entire understanding about India.

CONSCIENCE & MENTALITY

An investigation into the history of the manner in which a “cultural
complex”\(^1\) is observed by agencies who were nurtured outside it presents
the problem of comprehending the “cultural complex” in which the
observing agencies were formed and groomed, the manner in which these
agencies participated in the observed “cultural complex” and the process
of the reciprocity, resistance, acceptance and rejection that took place
between the “observer and observed”. The coming of the Christian
missionaries from Europe to India presents similar kind of historical
complexity. The missionaries and missions formed and groomed while
interacting with and emerging from western societies, came to India,
observed it and participated in its “cultural complex”. The problem lies in
comprehending the process historically and attempting to historicise
different factors involved in it. The problem is sought to be resolved by
trying to locate it within the study of mentality of the missionaries and
converts.

A mentality, in decision theory and general systems theory, refers
to a set of assumptions, methods or notations held by one or more people
or groups of people which is so established that it creates a powerful

\(^1\) I am using the term “Cultural complex” to denote totality of a distinct culture which though
being inwardly plural and diverse represents one single whole.
incentive within these people or groups to continue to adopt or accept prior behaviours, choices, or tools. This phenomenon of cognitive bias is also sometimes described as mental inertia, "groupthink", or a "paradigm", and it is often difficult to counteract its effects upon analysis and decision making processes. Conscience plays an important role in determining one's mentality, thereby making both linked inextricably.

It is imperative to discuss the way the term conscience is supposed to be applied in this study. Views of conscience are not considered to be mutually exclusive by many scholars. Although there is no generally accepted definition of what conscience is or what its role in ethical decision-making is, there are three main factors that determine which stance is adopted.

1. General views including the psychological, physiological, sociological, humanitarian and authoritarian views.
2. Religious views including the Divine Command Theory, the works of Newman, Aquinas, Butler, Bonhoeffer and so on.
3. Philosophical views including Hegel's Philosophy of Mind.

Most churches and religious groups hold the moral teachings of their sacred texts as the highest authority in any situation. In different cultures, the conscience is often illustrated as two entities, good and evil. The good is often understood as the right, the moral side; and the evil on the sinister and immoral side.

Conscience, in Catholic theology, is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed. Catholics are called to examine their conscience before confession. The Reformation is said to have began with Luther's crisis of
conscience. Conscience etymologically means with-knowledge. Conscience is the reason, employed about questions of right and wrong, and accompanied with the sentiments of approbation and condemnation. Any consideration of conscience must consider the estimate or determination of conscience and the resulting conviction or right or duty.

The development in the world at large, more particularly in the post Enlightenment era has even posed the problem of conscience to the missionaries. Along with the geographical discoveries of 16-17th centuries, almost all of them are associated with the growth of science and technology. While the geographical discoveries brought the missionaries and the Church in interface with the new societies and nations, the growth of science and technology made them to deal with a new kind of world in which the basis of theology and faith remained challenged. The problems of the modern world were sought to be solved by the spiritual and intellectual resources. Christian conscience might hope to address them – the situation or rather than the contrasting situations in which the Churches found themselves in relation to the world including indigenous societies and the modernity in the west that posed the problem – the emotions, the imaginations, the will etc. on the basis of conscience.2

To study history through the study of mentalities has been often criticized as ambiguous and vague.3 Problem in objectifying the complex processes in historical investigations probably renders that vagueness and ambiguity in the study. The attempts to evolve frameworks for objectification or to examine these processes scientifically too have many a times failed to rescue the study from the charges of oversimplification. "The notion of 'mentality', then, refers to a kind of historical beyond. Its

2 Mitchell Basil; The Christian Conscience; John McManner edited Oxford History of Christianity; OUP; 2002; P.618
3 Jacques Le Goff; Mentalities: a History of Ambiguities; Jacques Le Goff & Pierre Nora edited Constructing the Past; Cambridge University Press; 1974; P.166
function, as a concept, is to satisfy the historian's desire to 'go further' and leads to a point of contact with the other human science.\textsuperscript{4} The participation of the missionaries in Indian "cultural complex" brought them in interface with a pluralistic society engaging them intellectually as well as socially. They had to deal with Hindu traditions posing philosophical questions on the one hand and displaying popular cultures embedded in ritualism and tribalism. The missionaries tried to deal with these issues by attempting to comprehend them within their own mental frames which were in turn represented in their activities ranging from intellectual-philosophical to religious and cultural level.

**STUDYING THE MISSIONARIES**

A study of various dimensions including theology, conversion, conscience and mentality of missionaries in India requires an understanding of the historical process which led to the origin of Christianity and emergence of the Church in the West. The emergence of Christianity in the face of stubborn resistance posed by the Jews left no option for the followers of Jesus but to offer the gospel to the gentiles\textsuperscript{5} thereby legitimising conversions. This religious movement which sought to free itself from the clutches of Judaism had to contend with proliferating cults, sects, theological doctrines, interpretations etc. Such a process saw the evolution of church through a process of disciplining the preachers by formulating doctrines and attempting to arrest syncretic tendencies by legitimating and de-legitimating of theological interpretations and doctrines related to the gospel.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid, P. 167

\textsuperscript{5} The gentiles were the superstitious pagans of Palestine, Asia Minor, and parts thereabouts; they were steeped in belief in all the fables of all the gods of the heathen world. They suffered exclusion from the Jews who considered themselves as God's Chosen people.
The establishment of Church was followed by its consolidation in Europe marked by its appropriation of state power in pre-Enlightenment era. The personal and communal life of the people was guided and controlled by the church which had further appropriated temporal and spiritual space. The Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment era saw the authority of church challenged which resulted in the initiation of religious movements better known as 'Reformation' and 'Counter-Reformation' in European history culminating in withdrawal of churches from various spheres and the coming of new consciousness with the secularization and rationalization of the western societies. As a result Christianity "lost its erstwhile functions of legitimating authority and polity, of informing and superintending justice and the law; of providing the basis of education; and of reinforcing social control."\(^6\) The Church while attempting to overcome the challenges posed by new consciousness in the society started adapting itself to the new realities. The Church tried to accommodate modern discourses like democracy, scientificity and equality within its theological parameters seeking to appropriate the available space within the secular states. "One may note, in passing, the attempt at reconciliation of these spheres in the emergence of Christian Science and its various imitators which offer therapy as a pragmatic justification of a faith which purports to be as demonstrable as the natural science."\(^7\)

The missionary intervention in the non-European societies which were largely colonized was mostly as an agency that professed to represent modernizing elements. They claimed to bring salvation to the indigenous societies by converting them to Christianity. In a way, conversion was also sought to be represented as a method through which 'uncivilized' were

\(^6\) Wilson, Bryan; New Images of Christian Community; in John McManners edited Oxford History of Christianity; OUP; 2002; P.587
\(^7\) Ibid; P.609
supposed to be ‘civilized’ and rescued from oppressive religious-tribal-superstitious-magical practices.

EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN INDIA

The Syrian Christians or the St. Thomas Christians8 mostly settled in Malabar in Kerala are considered earliest converted Christian community. The conversion dates back to 1st c. AD and generally traced to an obscure apostolic tradition of St. Thomas. It is said that St. Thomas converted the Jews settled in Malabar region to Christianity, therefore the Syrian Christians represented an amalgam of traditions that could be traced to Aramaic speaking Judeo-Nasrani9 people. The Syrian Christian community, representing earliest contact of indigenous societies with Christianity, was integrated in the local environment adhering to common social customs, practices and traditions.10 “Among the Churches that St. Thomas is supposed to have founded are those of Palayur, Quilon, Kotamangalam, Paravur, Niranom, Kokka mangalam and the site at Cangnur-Malankara.”11 These Churches shared religio-cultural space with the local temples and shrines. The Syrians “negotiated their position through alliance with the local rulers and maintained their status by adhering strictly to the purity-pollution codes of regional Hindu society”.12 It may be said that the Syrian Christians had adapted themselves with the local customs and rites participating in the temple rites and ceremonies while at the same time ensuring the participation of the local non-Christian

8 The Saint Thomas Christians are a group of Christians based on the Malabar coast (in Kerala) in Southern India, who belong to different denominations of Syriac Christianity. They are popularly known as Syrian Christians in view of the Syriac (classical form of Aramaic) liturgy used in church services from the early days of Christianity in India.
9 The term Nasrani derives from the name Nazarenes used by ancient Jewish Christians in the Near-East who believed in the divinity of Jesus but clung to many of the Mosaic ceremonies. They follow a unique Hebrew-Syriac Christian tradition which includes several Jewish elements although they have absorbed some Hindu customs. They are often described as a ethno-religious group.
10 Bayly, Sasan; Saints, Goddesses and Kings;
11 Robinson, Rawena; Christians of India, Sage Publications, New Delhi; 2003; p, 41.
12 Ibid.
population in the ceremonies and rites of the Church. The sharing of religio-cultural space by the Christians and non-Christians was institutionalized through rites and ceremonies established through indigenous traditions.

From sixteenth century onwards, Christian missionaries started arriving India from European countries like Great Britain; France; Denmark; Netherlands and Portugal. India’s first noticeable contact with Christianity from Europe was established through the Portuguese colonisers who had aligned themselves with the Papacy. “Trade, conquest and Christianization went hand in hand for them; the sword accompanied the cross in the search for spices”.13 The Judeo-Nasrani tradition of the Syro-Malabar Nasranis was wiped out when the Portuguese invaded Kerala, and denounced the Nasrani account of Christian faith as false. They imposed their European rituals and liturgy and obliterated the Jewish legacy from the Nasrani tradition. The Portuguese described the Nasranis as Sabbath-keeping Judaizers. In 1559, a native Christian assembly was summoned under the Presidentship of Archbishop of Goa, Alexis de Menezes at Udayamperoor popularly known as Synod of Diamper issuing the following instructions to do away with Hindu influence hitherto forming a part of the Syrian Christian religio-cultural space:

1. “Christians were ordered to give up their early practice of Hindu names;
2. priests were asked to wear the gowns and cassocks of the Raomam Church;
3. the practice of tying a thali around the neck of the bride on the occasion of marriage was prohibited;

13 Ibid; p. 42.
4. the traditional native Christians practice of taking bath before entering the Church and abstinence from beef were declared unnecessary and un-Christian practices;
5. taking part in Hindu festivals such as Onam, Vishu, Utsavam (festivals) of temples, etc. was declared un-Christian;
6. the practice of consulting astrologers was declared a crime; and
7. marriages were to be held inside the Church instead of the native manner of solemnizing them at the residence of the bride or the groom.\textsuperscript{14}

The Portuguese centred their activities in Goa, where the church and state stood in alliance resorting to forcible mass conversions. Thereafter the scene was set for the arrival of missionaries from the west representing different denomination like Catholics, Anglicans, Protestants, Methodists, Baptists and others. These missionaries competed among themselves to gain converts and also sought to contend, compete and adjust with the indigenous cultures and traditions. Contrary to the claims of certain scholars like Frykenberg and others\textsuperscript{15}, it appears that the elements of earlier cross cultural sharing of ritual and social space between the Syrian Christians and the indigenous communities were sought to be de-legitimised by the missionaries coming from west through the process of evangelization.

For the present purpose, this study seeks to focus on various dimensions of missionary activities with the establishment of British colonial state in India. The nature of British colonial state and Portuguese Estado da India may be distinguished as the Portuguese claimed to be in alliance with papacy, while the Britishers were preferably inclined to

\textsuperscript{14} Expressions of Christianity; Vivekanand Kendra Prakashan; Nagraj & Co.; Chennai; 2007
\textsuperscript{15} Frykenberg, Robert Eric, Alaine Low (ed.); Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross cultural communications since 1500; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; 2003
promote their colonial interests. The course of debate on the colonial policy earlier remained hostile towards the missionaries as the Britishers preferred a cautious approach and chose to shun any course of action that would have invited opposition, violent reaction or any form of resistance from the Indians. “In fact that the power of the Company, and later of the British in India rested on the sepoy army, and that anything which touched the religion of the soldiers was likely to undermine their loyalty and thereby affect the security of Britain was brought home to the company by the Vellore mutiny. This predominant consideration weighed on the minds of the British in India, and one of the causes of the Great Rebellion of 1857 was the rumour that the fat of cows was used to grease the cartridges. The East India Company and its authorities could not therefore give any support to Christian propaganda.”

However, the missionaries continued to argue for state support and a shift in British policy took place with the Charter Act of 1813 whereby the missionaries were allowed to pursue their activities in the company ruled Indian domain. “The motifs of Civilization, Paternalism and world improvement woven into the missionary enterprise thus potentially facilitated the forging of linkages with the project of colonialism.”

“Indirectly, however, the British government of India gave the missionaries considerable help. Legislation protected the rights of converts to their share in the Hindu joint families, and the decision of high courts enabled converts to blackmail their wives to follow them into the fold of their new religion. The government also encouraged the missionaries to work among the backward tribes, being satisfied that Hindu opinion would not be offended by it.”

As it has been already stated that the British colonial rulers remained cautious in their approach vis-à-vis the missionaries at least up to the enactment of the Charter Act of 1813, the growing tide of the national movement, particularly in the later half of the 19th century, too engaged missionaries’ attention wherein

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16 Pannikker, KM; Asia and Western Dominance; John Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1953; P. 420
17 Rowena, Robinson; Christian of India; Sage Publications; 003; p. 56.
18 Pannikker, KM; Asia and Western Dominance; John Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1953; P. 421
sometime it was required to legitimize national movement without severing its links with the colonial state

Susan Bayly in her book "Saints, Goddesses and Kings" seeks to comprehensively analyse the emergence of numerous religio-cultural and social trends in South India as a result of the interaction between world's three great religion Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. She has chosen a time period 1700-1900 and draws from a premise which states, "It was not that South India was for all time 'an orthodox Hindu Society' on the contrary Christianity, Islam and Brahmanical Hinduism were forces which all came to impinge on the warrior cultures of South India at the same time. The warrior kings and the new rulers of the wet rice growing zones all found the 'high' Hindu traditions of the temples more appropriate to their new status and aspirations". The work seeks to delineate a historical process through the interaction of cults, rituals and conflict and complex links between religious and political powers.

Although the missionary intervention from the west saw the snapping of links of the Syrian Christians with the indigenous society, as they distanced themselves from the ceremonial temple 'ranks' and 'honours' which they had hitherto shared with the savarna Hindu groups, conversion to Christianity was not in any way a deterrent to caste groups like Paravas, Shanars, Vellalas etc. from observing their caste rules and tradition. These caste groups also never desisted from organising themselves along caste line on the question of ceremonial honours and ranks in church festivities, procession etc. It is further argued that the conversions were not always able to detach the converts from the indigenous socio-cultural milieu focussing on cult, divinities mostly conceived as warrior kings and heroes. Such a situation further
necessitated the missionaries to adopt the pattern by transforming south Indian worship into expression of Christian martyrdom.\(^{20}\)

Thus, Christianity too sought to organise itself around cult figures and shrines. St. Francis Xavier's and St. James' Charismatic tradition and the Church of the Lady of Snow are examples of the traditions intermixed with miracles, magical, boon-giver, healer etc. simultaneously seeking to integrate caste rituals and traditions. Inter-caste disputes over ceremonial honours and ranks and control over festival and procession routes became widespread with colonial intervention which had probably sharpened caste-distinctions and groups. Ferocious conflicts between Paravas and Shanars, Vellalas and shanars and other caste groups within Christianity also reflected the claims of these upwardly mobile caste groups seeking to explore their status within their adopted religion.

Although Bayly postulates a South Indian context in which Hinduism, Christianity and Islam enters at the same time and contend to gain space for themselves, she has mostly side stepped the modes and methodology as adopted by the propagators of Hinduism. It appears that she has attempted to distance herself from largely held "Hindu Environment" theory, but she has not engaged herself with the issue either. She proceeds by avoiding giving any deterministic term to the pre-existing socio-cultural and religious patterns, but later she fails to dissociate that pattern from lifestyles of converted groups in the same manner. However confusing it might be, her focus on syncretic traditions within Christianity and Islam introduces one to the scope for accommodation and adjustments available within these religious systems. Competition, contests and conflicts among converted castes brings to fore, that the logic under which such complex patterns are available does not adheres to the religion alone, but there are explanations that transcendent the same. It would have been

\(^{20}\) Ibid; p.455.
more enlightening had the study taken into account the limitation of the missionaries which led them to allow Syncretic tendencies and nurture caste traditions and rituals within Christianity.

Ines G. Zupanov in her book "Disputed Missions" tried to comprehend disputation within the mission focusing the epistolary communications between the missionaries. The significance of these epistolary disputations may be understood from the fact as she considers them to be the bedrock of later "anthropological and Indological over determination of Indian cultural and social 'essences' (that) took shape in unfolding colonial discourses". \(^{21}\) She further states, "The Geo-ethnographic mode of writing stands at the threshold of a 'scientific discourse' which developed from the 18th century onwards, fostering various orientalist disciplines..... The Jesuits were probably among the most quoted and 'plagiarized' writers of the 17th century."\(^{22}\)

In the 17c. India, the Jesuits were engaged with the question of the methodology compatible with Indian circumstances. Arrival of Nobili in the Madurai Mission mainly saw the debate assuming the shape of dispute wherein engagement mode with brahmanical knowledge was contested. After a period of observation he reached the firm conclusion that Christianity would have but little success in India if it kept to its western garb and refused to understand the mind and thought of the people of the country. In 1606, he obtained the approval of the society to undertake a serious study of Hinduism with the object, as he stated of learning how best to agree with the Brahmin leaders and expose the weakness of their creed. Nobili advocated an approach seeking 'accommodation within Brahmanical system considering conversion of

\(^{21}\) Zupanov; Disputed Mission; OUP; 1999; p. 145.
\(^{22}\) Ibid; p.103.
Brahmins necessary for the advancement of evangelising project. “In Fernandes’s view, Nobili had got it all wrong. According to his experience, the Brahmans were the most fanatical ‘pagans’ and they practiced the worst kind of superstitious behaviour to be found in India”.23 The outcome of the dispute saw the endorsement of Nobili’s position as he argued persuasively that Brahmanical cultural practices—the so called ‘sacred’ thread and a tuft of hair, Kudumi were purely political/social signs. Moreover, it seems that Nobili’s methods were a step ahead of the hitherto Jesuit approach of encounters with local kings and chieftain, theological discussion with Brahmans, and miracles and conversions. He banked himself on the discovery of the indigenous model of ‘non-violent’ coercion,24 i.e., the mode of cultural interaction.

Zupanov has attempted a sketch of the existing disputation in 17th C. Madurai Mission, which she postulates as fundamental element shaping the future colonial discourse. Apparently, the extant epistolary writings are replete with materials covering an important epoch in missionary history. But the study confines itself at the level of discourse and not amply focusses on the practices as were in vogue. Zupanov has seemingly relied too heavily on the epistolary communications in constructing narrative centred around a disputation which according to her represents dialogic/polemic mode and between aristocratic analogies and demotic descriptions. The power structure within the mission and the nature of the centre of authority to which dispute is addressed for resolution apparently requires much elaboration. On the whole one may not disagree with her observation of Nobili as she writes “It took him at least two decades to understand that his approach was inadequate, that the

23 Ibid; p. 36.
24 A Term used by Zupanov; Ibid; p.38.
Brahmans were not the key figures for global conversion and that there were other models of holiness and authority”.  

“Christians of India” by Rowena Robinson is an ethnographic and sociological account Christians in India aiming at thematic integration of many ‘Christianities’ in India. The study probably attempts to dislodge generally held monolithic view of Christianity and emphasises the indigenous nature of the same.

The work seeks to locate conversions in their historical contexts thereby identifying them within different modes and strategies. “These distinctions are important because modes and strategies are, (I would argue), crucially linked with varying political regimes and historical junctures and the possibilities and limitations they hold out”.  

A distinction in methodology and historical context is sought to be emphasised between the conversions of Syrian Christians, Goans by Portuguese, of the interiors and Pandicherry. Pre-British and British periods are too distinguished on the basis of different historical contexts and state systems. Robinson also attributes conversions of depressed classes to Christianity to the disruption wrought by colonial rule in many parts of rural India.  

The work, in a significant manner, seeks to explore internal differentiation within Christianity by the study of the question of class, status and gender. The practice of caste distinction and Church’s negotiation with it, endogamy, commensality and conception of class caste, hierarchy are elaborately discussed. On the question of gender,

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26 Robinson, Rowena; Christians of India; Sage Publications; 2003; p.11.
27 Ibid; p.39.
28 Ibid; p.60.
Robinson writes, “Despite some contradictory trends, the Christians and, in particular, the catholic perception of gender roles and responsibilities is not unambiguously liberating for women”.29

The study also discusses rituals and traditions rooted in local cultural contexts and the manner in which Christianity attempts negotiation and adaptation. While sphere of adaptation may be identified, the sphere of conflict is not ruled out and confrontation specifically in the case of Tribal culture is cited.

Oddie in his book Imagined Hinduism has relied on the assumption that “Hinduism” as a religion was the result of missionary imagination. The work seeks to take into account the intellectual background of the missionaries and the impact of Orientalist writings on their assumptions and imaginations. The book mainly seeks to study the protestant missionaries and their accounts of Hinduism. He seems to bank on WC Smith’s argument that religion was a European and Western concept. He has further attempted to explore the manner the protestant missionaries tried to construct Hinduism within the broader framework of a religion. The attempt of construction is attributed to writings about Hinduism, imagining it and developing an understanding about it which in turn they even seek to popularize by constantly portraying it in different manner but in the given framework.

Oddie has attempted to trace the earlier accounts of the travelers and missionaries which had an impact over the understanding of the missionaries who came to India from Europe. The portrayal of customs like idolatry, sati, hook swinging and worshipping of ‘demonic’ gods and goddesses represented Hinduism as a system created by devil. He also attempts to decipher the evolution of the paradigm called “Hinduism”

29 Ibid; p.102.
which was treated as Brahmin centric religion. He considers Serampore missionaries Carey and Ward to be the main proponents of this paradigm which found reflections in many of the missionary writings and even influenced James Mill’s History of British India. He writes:

“The idea of Hinduism being a carefully contrived system, as reflected in Sanskrit texts and popular practice, the tyranny and control of Brahmans (comparable to or even worse than the Catholic priests of the Dark Ages), the stress on the ‘meanness, the absurdity, the folly of endless ceremonies in which the practical part of Hindu religion consists (Mill 1826, Vol.2:166-67)’ the degree to which fantastic ceremonies were exalted over moral duties, the perversion and uselessness of self inflicted torment, the cruelty of ‘barbarous’ customs such as human sacrifice and sati, the sexual immorality associated with Hindu worship and more, these were points on which Mill and Ward agreed.”

It seems that Oddie has tried to study the Protestant’s accounts in isolation. Although he has tried to relate these accounts with the Orientalist scholars he has ignored the Indian response to missionary activities at religious and social plane. In emphasizing the claim that “Hinduism” was an imagined religion, he refuses to recognize any pre-modern collective religious consciousness among Indians. In discussing the missionary accounts of popular beliefs and practices and Orientalist account of Brahmanical religion, he has taken a rather simplistic view of looking at them as separate categories and not taking into account the gaps in the missionary-orientalist knowledge about the Hindu traditions.

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30 Oddie, Geoffrey, Imagined Hinduism; Sage Publications; 2006; P.182
SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study needs to take into account various aspects of missionary interface with the indigenous communities. One of the major problems that the missionaries had to contend with in the beginning is to understand the prevalent indigenous traditions within a theological-conceptual framework. In order to comprehend the diverse and variegated traditions it was required to locate them within their understanding of religion. For the missionaries, the term religion applied to Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Paganism or Heathenism. Indian indigenous traditions were also sought to be understood as Paganism first and later as “Hinduism”. Recently scholars have imputed the origin of the term “Hinduism” entirely to the missionaries’ representation of the indigenous Hindu traditions as a religion, thus imagining it and constructing it. It has been sometime claimed that the process of construction of religion “Hinduism” in fact resulted in the creation of “Hinduism” while nothing like that existed in India. It appears something akin to the argument that India was constructed by the Britishers in the manner in which “Hinduism” was a product of the missionaries. The works of the British scholars like Holwell, Alexander Dow, Halhed, Warren Hastings, Charles Wilkins, William Jones and others are cited as having initiated the process of the construction of “Hinduism” which was carried forward by the missionaries.

Those arguing that “Hinduism” was an imagined, constructed or invented by the British scholars and missionaries seem to have ignored the larger historical processes and continue to bank on one sided view of history. The chapter, Constructing Hinduism: Myth or Reality, seeks to study various arguments emphasizing the construction theory. It appears that the process of construction, if any, was itself not explained in its entirety. Such conceptualization operates under the assumption that there was not collective religious consciousness in pre-colonial India. While it
questions the validity of "Hinduism" as a religion, it also undermines the claim of Hindu traditions having collective consciousness. It has been attempted to conceptualize "Hinduism" as a religion and religion as a category has been sought to be understood as something static, rigid and absolute.

While locating the indigenous Hindu traditions within the framework of religion, it was necessary to understand the underlying philosophy, rites, customs and traditions so as to engage them in theological debates. While attempting to understand the complexity of the Indian traditions, the missionaries tried to test the validity of the intellectual traditions by placing them within the discourse of modernity. It may be noted that the Church in Europe had to contend with the modern discourses whereby its legitimacy and absolute claim over theological-political-social domain was seriously challenged and severely dented and it was later able to adjust and adapt itself with new realities. In their engagements with the non-European societies, the missionaries tried to test the validity of the indigenous intellectual systems through the discourses of modernity in the manner similar to which the Church was challenged in the west. In their efforts to modernize the colonized societies, the missionaries spoke in the languages similar to the colonizers striving to Christianize in order to 'civilize'.

In the Indian context, the missionaries while trying to understand the Indian philosophy, traditions, customs and rituals represented them as per their own imaginations. It was attempted to problematise theoretically the philosophical traditions of Upanishads, Bhagwad Gita, Vedanta, Nyaya, Mimansa, Samsakaras etc. and also to delineate links with Catholicism. The questions related to divinity, infallibility, historicity and revealed status of the scriptures were raised and addressed to. The chapter on Representation of Indian Philosophy & Tradition in Missionary
Literature discusses the manner in which the missionaries tried to comprehend the entire traditions and sought to represent them while locating them within the discourse of modernity while attempting to refute the claims of divinity and infallibility. While it may be said that many of the missionaries works were the result of knowledge seeking individuals,

To gain converts from a diversified and complex socio-cultural and economic contexts required modes and strategies unique to local environment. The study seeks to explore the strategies and methodologies adopted by the missionaries and the larger historical contexts in which they were located. Whether conversion can be purely treated as a theological issue or the missionaries were able to see the multiplicity of issues involved therein was a question which was supposed to determine the course of missionary activities in India. How far was the missionaries were able to adapt themselves with the Indian circumstances from their western roots while gaining converts? Were the missionaries able to convert the people in the manner they wanted them and how they sought to transform the indigenous religio-cultural milieu. Conversion cannot be simply stated as change of religion, but it represents a historical process which while altering the religio-cultural terrain seeks to transform the socio-political dimension of a society.

The chapter on Conversion: Modes and Strategies attempts to study the strategies and methodologies adopted by the missionaries and the larger historical contexts in which they were located. The experiments done by the missionaries in Patna mission, the works of the missionaries in Chhotanagpur, and their experiments in Jashpur are the case studies which give an insight into the problems faced by the missionaries and the manner in which they tried to address them. Missionaries opening Banks, factories, helping the people in their law suits, running Co-operative societies etc. to gain converts was a process which signified their realisation that
conversion of the indigenous people was not possible by banking on the theological preaching alone.

The missionaries had probably their own notions of social value system and morality. Moreover, "Christian Mission activity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were infused with ideas of reform and civilizing the 'natives', bringing them into harmony with the ideology of social superiority held be the colonial rulers." Particularly, in the case of tribals, the missionaries appeared determined to change their belief system even by coercion. The missionary engagement with social work opens another field of enquiry dominated by notion of 'devotion' and 'service'. Perhaps, it is owing to such factors that the study of missionary conscience and mentality become significant.

The chapter Missionary Mentality discusses various aspects of Church in shaping the conscience and mentality of the missionaries. The western background of the missionaries imbued them with various assumptions like colonial rule was for the betterment of the colonized and the notion of "White Men's burden" and "civilizing" role of the westerners were considered valid ideas by them. The kind of understanding that the missionaries had reached about Hindu traditions also determined their mentality. Hindu traditions, which they tried to fit within the framework of religion, appeared to them pessimistic, contradictory, idolatrous, retrogressive, superstitious and full of irrational customs and practices. The priestly formation which was conducted through training at different centres also probably had an impact over their mentality as the training was mainly centred on western concepts and curriculum.

31 Wallace, W., S.J.; Indifference & Renunciation As Taught in the Hindu Shastras; Typed; Academy Records; 1913; P. 67
It is also attested to take into account some of the famous Jesuit Fathers who worked in Chhotanagpur region. Father Mullender is considered the earliest catholic missionary who created the ground for future missionary activities. Father Sylvian Grosjean presided over large scale conversions in Chhotanagpur as a Superior and was known for his fund raising capacity. Father Constant Lievens was most famous of them all who effected large scale conversions among the tribals through his ingenuous methods. Father Hoffinan and Father Louis Cardon are said to have carried forward the work of the mission in the area. The missionaries had a notion of self in which they considered themselves as “civilizing agents” seeking to emancipate the local population from age old irrational customs and practices. They also saw the local Rajahs and zemindars as oppressor and Colonial rule as having emancipatory effect on the people.

In the Conclusion an account of the absolute claim of Church over salvation and related missionary dilemma is also discussed. While Church was considered to a dynamic organism, Missions were portrayed as its natural extension to bring salvation to various societies. The engagement of missionaries with the non-European and non-Christian societies presented a dilemma as to whether salvation outside the Church was possible. The missionaries sought to address this dilemma on the basis of their own theological positions and faith. A study of the mentality and conscience of the converted groups is aimed at understanding the complexity of the process at different historical situations wherein the converted groups negotiated with the missionaries in upholding their hitherto belief systems and moral-sacred order and probably resisted attempts to detach them from the local socio-cultural milieu. The missionary even started to doubt whether the proselytizing work was in the desired direction and conversion was yielding the desired results.
The study seeks to study various aspects of missionary engagements with the Hindu traditions. Attempt has been made to study the theoretical aspects wherein supposed construction of "Hinduism" is sought to be located within historical context. While missionary representation of the philosophy and traditions is studied, a regional focus is maintained in the Chhotanagpur are for case studies. In the study of Chhotanagpur region, missionary engagement with the tribal people is sought to be studied. The study seeks to take into account the manner in which missionaries participated in the Indian "cultural complex" and tried to understand and influence and articulated about religious, cultural and social dimensions.

32 The term "tribe" stands disputed. Please see Susan B.C. Devalle; Discourses of Ethnicity: Culture of Protest in Jharkhand; Sage Publications; New Delhi; 1992), Henceforth, in the study the terms "tribe" and "tribal" will be used as it is generally so categorized and not for any theoretical supposition.