CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION
As in many other areas, the Christian missions followed the colonial expansion in North-East India too. This was so particularly in Manipur and Lushai hills where, as a result of the secluded policy of colonial rulers which was further intensified by the enactment of inner line regulation, the Christian missions were under the force of circumstances to seek or to depend on the goodwill of the officials for their very existence, not to speak of their works. But on the whole, the government officials had a friendly attitude towards Christian missions and there is not the slightest doubt that such friendly relations between officials and missionaries were considered important because each partner got tangible benefits out of it. As long as the missionary movement did not pose a threat to the colonial occupation, the officials served to reinforce the missionary efforts particularly through the system of grants-in-aid to educational schools and other humanitarian or philanthropic works. For this seeming benevolent paternalism often served as an effective means for legitimization of their rule. On the other hand, so long as the support from the government helped the Christian missions in achieving their main aim - the propagation of the Christian faith - the missionaries also extended an unstinted help to the government. Such being the attitude of the two partners, stress and strains
as arose between them tended to be compromised and solved for the sake of maintaining the system.

Thus, the type of mutual relationship that existed between the officials and the missionaries was based on the temporary process of conditional reciprocity. It did not germinate from their ideological confluence, but grew out of necessity and expediency. The moment the missionary movement threatened political stability, the government did not show any least hesitancy to curb such mission movements. Also, the moment the missionaries realized that the government was interfering in their religious instruction, they were ready to delink their relationship with the government. This shows that mutual interconnection between officials and missionaries did not at all involve ideological surrender or compromise.

But this mutual interconnection, however partial or temporary it might be, had done almost an irrepairable damage on the credibility of Christian missions. By helping directly or indirectly to legitimise the colonial rule, they became tied directly or indirectly to the colonial system. While welcoming protection from colonial authorities, they also tended to emphasise in their teachings subservience and loyalty to the colonial state. The involvement of native Christians and the missionaries in the war efforts and punitive measures pointed to this
conclusion. Therefore, subject to human frailty and errors, the missionaries, with the exception of few, had proven themselves as more docile subjects tending to blow hot and cold, rather than as 'true servants of Christ who would consistently fight against the existing corrupted structure of the society in which they lived.

At most the missionaries were conservative innovators. While their works in terms of education and literature acted as instruments of social change and modernization, their overall impact contributed, at the best, to the re-finisation of the existing colonial structures. Being ethnocentrist like the officials, they tended to have no genuine sympathy for the basic elements of tribal society. As a result, many of the joie de vivre of the tribal cultures now disappeared. Inevitably, their work on education provided the material basis for the emergence of Westernized and articulate elites who became critical of the colonial rule. In course of time, the missions evolved numerous institutions such as district level church council, presbyteries and assemblies through which the native leadership was trained in the techniques of self-administration with a view to realise their proclaimed goal of an independent indigenous church which was to be self-propagating, self-supporting and self-governing.
One glaring weakness of the Christian missions was the importation of sectarian and denominational divisions into the places wherever they worked. The disunity, rather mutual jealousy and exclusivism which marked the relations between the different mission societies tended to make them more as missionaries for one particular denomination than the Gospel. While the missions did not originate in-group consciousness among the different ethnic groups, they did sharpen it by fostering feelings of linguistic and ethnic exclusivity and hence innumerable community-based church groups.

In spite of all these defects, the greatest strength of Christian missions lie in their own character, dedication and sincerity which alone endeared them with the people in the service of whom some of them laid down their lives while others spent the best part of their lives. In fact, true Christianity could release its true and creative power only when it was based on itself and not on outside forces. The cruel dilemma in which the Christian missions were placed during the whole period under study was not what was to be rendered unto Caesar but how much was to be rendered unto Caesar so as not to affect their Christian commitments.