CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
1.1 Christian Missions and Colonialism

In the nineteenth century Christian missions and colonialism seemed to follow upon each other in Africa and Asia. It is for this reason that in the eyes of many African and Asian peoples colonialism was seen to assume both the role of a 'politician' and a 'priest' and Christian missions appeared to be a part of and an expression of western colonial expansion. Some of them even go to the extent of characterising missions as merely the 'hunting dog of western imperialism'.¹ Under the surface of seemingly cordial relations between missions and colonialism, there lay a many branched complexity of difficulties. In the historical period, missions and colonialism interacted in different forms and at different levels. This is to say that the mode of their interactions differed from mission to mission and also from country to country. The degree and extent of the interactions or conflicts between missions and colonialism largely depended on the particular mission and issues involved as well as the nature of the colonial situation.²

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Therefore, generalisation of the relation of a particular mission with a particular colonial government would be risky. The specific objective of this section is to examine the interconnections and collision of the missionary and colonial interests and then provide a broad framework within which the missionary movement in India in general and the North-East in particular is to be approached.

For the purpose of our analysis, the missionaries can be categorised into three groups: (i) total collaborationists; (ii) partial collaborationists; and (iii) non-collaborationists.

Total collaboration between missions and colonialism, even though shortlived, could be seen in the case of Spain and Portugal which were two countries of strong Catholic faith. For these two countries, missionary work could hardly be dissociated from the interest of the state nor could the latter do without the faithful cooperation of missionisation. Obsessed with the middle-aged conception of missionisation, Portugal and Spain were solely guided by the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*. Not only did they send out missionaries but also had taken up the care for their equipment as well.

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as for the sustenance of their missionaries. Where missionary activity was backed up by colonial power, missionary preaching obviously assumed a political taste. The native peoples also got the impression that one had 'missionised' them to exploit them. Faith was purely a matter of will and it involved personal decision. Religion by compulsion had no worth and therefore missionisation through violence was always objectionable. Aware of the serious implications of coupling of mission and colonial politics, Catholic missions, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, gradually took up missionary leadership in their own hands. The Congregatio de propaganda fide (from Pope) cautioned its missionaries that they should not occupy themselves with politics and also not to allow themselves to be used for political purposes.  

In contrast to Spain and Portugal, the English Crown did not become itself the coloniser. There seemed to be no clear-cut alignment of the sword with the cross even though there was a strong current of public opinion in English society that regarded plantations and colonising agencies to be responsible for the propagation of the Christian faith. In his instruction to the English navigators, Edward VI stressed that the service of Christianity must be the chief interest of such as should

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4 Ibid., p.106.
make at foreign discovery. In fact, commercial and missionary opinion constituted the basis of the nineteenth century English liberalism. The only difference was that the English colonial politics in Asia lay in the hands of a powerful private trading company - the British East India Company - which was motivated purely by commercial interest. The company saw in the mission a possibility of disruption of peace which could affect adversely its business. While the company's view on mission did not necessarily represent those of the British empire, the affinity of Christian missions and British colonial policy seemed to be apparently over-shadowed by the company's antagonistic attitude towards the missionary movement.

Even where there was a sort of collaboration, whether total or partial, between missions and colonial politics, it was not without long-term contradictions. But why could there be, after all, such collaboration? Had the missions prepared the way for colonial conquests directly or indirectly? What was the attitude of the missionary towards the colonial powers? What was the motive of the colonial powers in supporting the missionary? What were the implications of collaboration between missions and colonial politics?


In most cases, the missionary was far ahead of the government and even of the trader. In a backward region where a state of barbarism or savagery existed, the missionary usually ventured to work. The selfless services which he rendered in terms of his expert knowledge and moral influence tended to have a soothing effect on the peoples among whom he worked and lived. This sometimes made the way easier for the exercise or gaining of political control over the native peoples and this happened usually where the missionary and the government belonged to the same nationality. When such colonial rule was established, the missionary work tended to legitimise the colonial occupation. Unable to distinguish the 'white man who preached' from the 'white man who ruled', for after all both had the same lifestyle and livelihood, the native peoples looked upon European rule as beneficial. But the psychological and social implications of colonialism had disadvantages that far outweighed the heralded advantages.


Events in Africa produced proofs that the missionaries normally favoured the idea of bringing their mission areas under the government to which they belonged. Nobody could doubt at the beginning David Livingstone's sincerity when he went to South Africa from Scotland to be a missionary and doctor to the people of Africa. However, Livingstone was not always the same person. His later public utterance showed that his main objective was the opening up of a path for trade and Christianity in Africa. So far there was no much cause for surprise. But more surprising was when he was said to have whispered to the Duke of Angyll: "... what I can tell to none but such as you, in whom I have confidence, is this. I hope it may result in an English colony in healthy islands of Central Africa". Livingstone had to eventually break away from his original African sponsors, the London Missionary Society, because the latter thought that he spent too much time exploring without gospelling. Likewise the English missionaries in Cameroon and in South African Bachuanaland also decided for British occupation of their mission areas. The Anglican missionaries in New Zealand were perhaps the strongest opponents of imperial

10 Ibid., p.135.
expansion. But they also succumbed when it seemed apparent that if the British did not come in, the French would do so. 12

As political control advanced, the missionary was prepared to welcome it and to cooperate with the government if he was convinced that its policy was of benefit to the subject people. It should be noted that the missionaries belonged to the epoch of Cecil Rhodes and Bismarck. They were liable to be caught up in the stream of the time and half consciously to identify their own country's interests with the interests of the kingdom of God. 13 No human motives were entirely pure and even the most blameless of missionaries could be a victim to this. Instances, though few, showed that some missionaries left the service of their missions and enthusiastically entered into the service of their country in its colonial domain. This inevitably made them appear before the eyes of the world and of the subject peoples in particular more in the character of agents of their government than messengers of the gospel. 14 Even where the missionary had not served directly the colonial power, he had only too gladly accepted the protection from and development through the colonial

13 Ibid., p.280.
14 Ibid., p.414.
power. In such a situation, the missionary found it difficult to resist the temptation to collaborate with the government. More difficult was for those missionaries with pro-imperialist leanings who held the view that the hand of God was visible in colonial expansion. They tried to mystify colonial expansion as a 'divine command' to intensify their evangelical works.

Gustav Warneck, the leading head of the German Evangelical Mission of the time, has admitted that the objective of German colonial movement was not the establishment of the kingdom of heaven on earth. But at the same time he has theologised the colonial movement as if it were a 'divinely willed' opportunity for a missionary cause and "if God in heaven provides an opportunity then His servants on earth have to take up the work".¹⁵ Such 'divinely willed opportunities' were usually never let off by most mission societies. Warneck has thus justified the missionary's action that sought to take advantage of the colonial situation. More serious, he has rigidly maintained that only the great colonial movements had made the missions acceptable.¹⁶ This was really a dangerous proposition because the white official's behaviour which was not always in conformity with the Biblical doctrines could stand in the way of the success of missionary work.

¹⁵ Klaus Bade, op.cit., p.82.
¹⁶ Ibid., p.82.
The humiliation of China and the subsequent signing of the treaty of Nanking after the Opium War in 1842 was, for instance, immediately seized upon by the missionaries as if it were opened by Providence for missionising the Celestial Empire. An Englishman, David Urguhart made fun of the episode saying that 'England was offering China at the same time opium and evangelism'. So continuous and so vehement was China's hostility towards the western missionaries that the latter found no other alternative than to fall back upon the western powers. In turn the dependence of missions on the government made the Chinese to think that the missionary movement was just a part of western imperialism. In their eyes the missionary was not different from the merchant, the diplomat and the captain of the western gunboat. The missionary who might otherwise have disapproved of colonial expansion for its mundane goals tended to become a willing partner when he thought that the propagation of Christian faith might be promoted by such colonial expansion.

There is no doubt that the missionary expansion in various countries was greatly facilitated through its

association with the government agencies. Prior to the
extension of British political authority into the Igbo
country in West Africa, most Igboos treated missionary
evangelism with respectful indifference. F.K. Ekechi,
in this connection has argued that British military
imperialism and other forms of colonial exploitation
were in fact basic to the decision of many Igbo communi-
ties to embrace Christianity.19 Therefore, some missi-
onaries in West Africa tended to regard British power and
prosperity as a blessing for fidelity to the true faith
and thus see nothing insidious about taking advantage of
their association with British economic or political
expansion to further the kingdom of God.20 Surely some
missionary movement had an almost Hebraic faith. They
also believed in worldly success and power which certainly
attended the faithful pursuit of duty, and were instru-
mental in forwarding God's purposes in the world.21 The
only restraining factor was that these worldly success
and power were not to be striven for on their own accounts.

19 F.K. Ekechi, "Colonialism and Christianity in
West Africa: The Igbo Case, 1900-1915" in
Journal of African History, vol.21, no.1, 1971,
p.103.
21 Eric Stokes, op.cit., p.33.
Where the mission submerged into the colonial plunge without any restraint, its credibility irreparably suffered and it was bound to be, to use Paul Schuetz's phrase, "the hunting dog of Caesar who allows him to run, he will whistle him back. The hunting dog serves him. The mission is an important factor in culture and civilization and the Caesar has the full right to whistle him away or back and it helps fulfilling his dearest tasks". 22

While some missions might not have totally excluded a possibility of preparatory support of colonial aggrandizement, it would be wrong to assume that all missions had close connections with colonial politics. Nor was it true that the missions or missionaries could not operate successfully without the support of a colonial government. Klaus-J Bade, a noted German theologian, has argued with some exaggeration that the interconnection between missions and colonial policy centred on the question of the need for political stability which was provided either by missions or colonial rule. 23 Bade has overlooked the fact that stable political condition was not a pre-conditional factor for the success of missionary work.


23 Klaus Bade, op.cit., p.78.
There were many mission stations outside the European colonies too. It cannot, however, be denied that political stability was needed by missions for greater and more permanent development. In fact the missionary and the native Christians profited from stabilisation of political relations, improvement of transportation and the economic development of a colony, let alone the significance of the freedom of preaching and practising one's own religion guaranteed by the state. Peaceful and stable conditions did foster those conditions wherein Christian values and virtue and, to be more specific, the Christian faith, among them, could take deeper roots.24

Falling in line with Klaus Bade, Elias Schrenk, a missionary of Basel Missionary Society, in his memorandum to the British Parliament, has emphatically stressed as if peace was a sine qua non for missionary work and even justified the stronger power stepping in where weaker peoples had not yet managed to arrive at a state of peace among themselves.25 The truth of the matter is that many missions could operate successfully independent of colonial support. For instance, there emerged many mission stations in countries such as Fiji, South and Central

African, Sierra-Leone, Burma, Guinea, etc., long before the British imperialists had set their first foothold over them.  

Similarly British missionaries had managed to penetrate in Madagascar and Buganda and consequently won large number of converts quite outside the realm of British colonial administration. These instances not only invalidated the theory that the missionary found it impossible to work outside the protection of a colonial power or the support of armed forces but also established the fact that peaceful condition was not indispensable.

But one must not overlook the fact that the colonial powers in many cases more or less directly exploited missions for their own ends. In the course of the nineteenth century, the colonial powers had also developed the concept of 'civilizing responsibility' in their colonial ventures. The concern for the progress of the native peoples and promotion of the 'ideas of advantages of civilization' also figured in the Congo Conference in Berlin, 1885, which commenced, of course, with ceremonial evocation of the omnipotent God. The conference

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was attended by almost all European colonial powers. It was the colonialists' strategy to try to clothe their colonial enterprise as a divine mission - that of the taking up the 'white man's burden' - to the subject peoples. The mutual binding between missions and colonial politics was at its strongest where the two accepted the 'white man's burden' as a 'genuine responsibility' which some anti-imperialist missionaries referred to as a 'Christian imperialism'.

The theory of operational unity was put in such a way as to give to the impression that colonisation and missionary work were two sides of the same thing. Certainly there were common fields of operation. Education and medical works were the areas in which missions and colonial structures were most closely integrated. The intermingling of missionary work and colonial politics had to give in very quickly when the financial or manpower powers of missions became inadequate to perform the tasks. In such case, the government offered funds to the missions for these humanitarian services. But they did not stop there. They carefully tried to infuse or introduce the interest of 'motherland' in the teaching materials and in shaping the whole educational structure.

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31 Ibid., p.35.
The educative process thus seemed to be involved more on the systematic application of influence on the mentality, intelligence, and moral and religious conceptions of the subject peoples. The whole undertaking of missions (where they collaborated with the colonial powers) was made with an avowed allegiance to the nation-state. In the process, the missions tended to operate within a limited framework of colonial structure. They catered to the needs of the government by training and recruiting the lower level of the government and commercial bureaucrats. The socialisation of the subject peoples into the colonial culture appeared to be the manifested function of such missions which at most improved the existing structures.32

The question arises: why did the colonial powers back such moves? It was not that all the colonial powers had developed such an interest in missionary work from purely religious motives. They were perhaps convinced that the 'civilizing influence of missions' advanced colonial plans directly or indirectly. Moreover, in contrast to officials of colonial administration, the missionaries, by virtue of their dedication and deep commitment to their works, had gained closer relationship of trust and intimacy with the people. Equally

important, the missionaries had remained as a rule considerably longer, if not for life, in the country. Therefore, the missionary movement was seen as the most effective force of colonisation, not only because it did not use force, but especially since it penetrated more deeply into the life of the people. The cooperation of missions or missionaries was sought as the completion of the task that the colony of a Christian power (nation) became Christianised colony because of the fear that the colonisers could never consolidate their authority if the subject people were not Christians. Their whole concept thus centred on *conquista espiritual*. Aime Casaire in his 'Discours sur le Colonialisme' has argued that Christianity was related to colonialism in so far as the evangelical task was exploited by colonisers as they hypocritically put the cloak of humanity on something inhuman. The double equation: Christianity = civilization; heathenism = barbarism (lack of civilization) became propagated which could give rise to fearful colonialistic and racist consequences, the victims of which became the non-European peoples.

The misrepresentation of missionary work as an indispensable factor for 'national undertaking' also

33 Klaus Bade, *op.cit.*, p.79.
34 Von Walter Holsten, *op.cit.*, p.163.
35 Ibid., p.162.
provided the seemingly common ground of operational unity.
In this way the significant step for coordination of missionary and national interests of a particular country to which the missionary belonged was made. In such case, the mission could be a 'mission of faith and love' only in the way it served the church and the country. This was, in fact, a critical situation in which many missionaries were placed. Claiming to be both a missionary and a nationalist at the same time, some missionaries even carried with them their national prejudices and took up the work of spreading the gospel as a matter of 'patriotic honour' and 'national duty' as well. Some missionaries, of course, did try to justify missions, to some people, in terms of the values and goals which such people could appreciate, but which really had little to do with how the missionaries really thought or felt. Can we call this dishonest or scurrilous; or can we see in it human frailty and weakness in bending to the force of the times, and a natural desire not to be thought of as unsophisticated or incomprehensible? But one thing is clear. The basic characteristic of Christianity was its

37 Bengt Sundkler, The World of Mission (Michigan, 1965), p.121; See also Bade, op.cit., p.83.
universalism. The moment it was made to lose its universalness by linking it with the national interests of a particular country, the mission eventually became colonial expansion and colonial expansion became colonialism. 38

As a matter of fact, Christianity knew no geographical or national barriers. Apostle Paul’s message: “It is through faith that all of you are God’s sons in union with Christ Jesus” and here “there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free men, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus”. 39 In other words, this can be changed into a teaching of fraternity of all humanity. Faith in Christ automatically became faith in new humanity. This can be further illustrated from Jesus Christ’s teaching and behaviour which was subversive both to the Jewish power structure and Roman imperialism. By birth Jesus was a Jew, but the universal character of the new humanity that he proclaimed contradicted the nationalist particularism of the Jewish authorities. 40 Discipleship of Jesus, thus in a final

38 Holsten, op. cit., p.167.
39 Galatians: 3:26 and 28 (Good News Bible).
analysis, "consists, above all, in total self-dedication to the creation of a new human community, in which love will replace violence, service will replace the brute exercise of power, in which no barrier will separate man from man, in which the first will be the least of today, namely, the wretched and the dispossessed of the earth". 41

Seen in this light, the right evangelical mission kept itself decidedly away from any solidarity with colonial power whatsoever and protected itself in the face of emphasis on colonial and general civilizing purposes. It follows from our discussion that the right mission or anti-collaborationist missionary could not be used as a maid servant to the colonial politics and milch cow for any particular nation or country. Nor could it be used as a sacrificial lamb to any particular national interest. Instead, the missionary did not (i) give compromising loyalty to a government if that government was an instrument of oppression; (ii) tolerate any national limitations; and (iii) allow a dichotomy. 42 In short, he denounced all subtle forms of ruling and controlling claims and undertook all measures to ensure human dignity to all people of the world. Regardless

41 Ibid., p.117.
42 Gensichen, op.cit., p.149.
from which nation he came, for him, these words of Apostle Paul were the only guidance: "Pro-Christo legations fungimur" (we are emissaries of Christ). 43 It would be the death of the apostolate if the missionary served his earthly fatherland more than God's kingdom, because the native people could easily understand what he actually wanted from them. 44

Underneath the apparent alliance between the Cross and the Flag, there were therefore inner ideological contradictions. The missionary movement, in its most basic sense, was motivated by 'a profound love of Christ and an intense desire that others should share that love, together with a sincere love of his fellowmen and sympathy with the poor and the suffering who were the special objects of the love of Christ. 45 Whereas the colonial movement was primarily motivated by commercial interest—the interest to exploit the raw material resources and find new markets for home industries. Basically colonial policy was inconsiderably egoistic. It looked upon the natives as members of an inferior race and as instruments

to further its own interests. Aime Casaire has discussed at length the damaging impact of colonialism on the subject peoples. He has seen in colonisation nothing but the lust for gold, plunder and profiteering and concluded that "a nation which colonised and justified colonisation begot finally and inevitably its Hitler". 46

Their method of work and approach also point to the inner contradiction in their basic beliefs. While the missionary preached Christian precepts of charity, unselfishness, purity and temperance, the colonial official practised ruthless severity and enriched himself by forcing the natives into virtual slavery. 47 This is not to ignore the fact that there were many officials who were public spirited, even as much the missionary. There was some paternalism in them. But among the business people there was terrible class snobbery and race prejudices; but the officials were more paternalistic. In supporting the missionary's educational programme, the colonial government wished to have orderly and disciplined citizens who could staff its administrative apparatus. On the contrary, the cultural and social side effects of missionary preaching and community building including medicinal work had contributed to the availability of not necessarily disciplined but thoughtful

47 Shivaram, op.cit., p.10.
people who at times resorted to a criticism of existing systems or even protested against the injustice of colonial rule. And it was these newly emergent elites among the Asian and African folks who took over the government in the post-colonial period.

From the very outset, the missions were concerned with the building up of an independent churches with their own leaders both in Asia and Africa. Thus in so far as the missions were concerned, the idea of independence had been formulated consciously or unconsciously long before any colonial power had thought of such questions of nationalism. Through this, a new conflict arose between the goals of missionaries and those of colonial politics. While Christianity was not based on any 'isms' whatsoever, Christian awareness was, for instance, an integral part of the creativeness of African nationalism. Christianity taught the uniqueness of an individual, an infinite worth before God; whereas colonialism, in many respects, said just the opposite. In short, Biblical teachings were basically at variance with colonialism. Few erring pro-imperialist missionaries were suspicious of the emergence of nationalist

51 Ibid., p.112.
movements and they either kept themselves aloof from such movements or took sides with the eclipsed colonial power. But these few missionaries should not be confused with the main stream of missionaries who, by example and precepts, had demonstrated the reality of Christian principles.\footnote{Ibid., p.114.} It is, therefore, more correct to say that true European Christians stood on the side of what was right, namely, that oppression or suppression of any human being was wrong. Such missionaries found themselves in close friendship with the national leaders and strove for independence from the colonial rule in decisive phases of freedom struggles both in Asia and Africa.

Everything considered, Christian missions and colonialism were two movements opposite to each other fundamentally. They were two distinct institutionalised entities drawing their inspirations from opposed conceptual extremes. Therefore, the interconnection between them was more in the nature of highly temporary process which was solely determined by the principle of expediency.

\subsection*{1.2 Christian Missions and the Company’s Government}

Having shown the interactions, both positive and negative between Christian missions and colonialism in general, this section attempts to provide a broad hint
on the specific relationship between Christian missions and the East India Company because this would provide a clearer perspective of the historical development of missionary movement in North east India.

There were certain traditions which centred around St. Thomas (the doubting disciple of Christ) honouring him as the first Christian missionary to the east. While the tradition of the apostolic origin of Christianity in India cannot be fully tested by the criteria of modern historical research, one tends to agree with Jawaharlal Nehru when he declared in the Lok Sabha on 3 December 1955 that Christianity was as old in India as the religion itself and that, as a religion, it found its roots in India even before it went to countries like England, Portugal and Spain. What Nehru tried to convey was that Christianity was as much a religion of the Indian soil as any other religion in India. But the problem is that Christianity remained exclusively, if not completely, confined to a very small group of a particular area of the country. More seriously, during the colonial period, it, more or less, lost its...

indigenosity and gradually came to be regarded as if it were the exclusive religion of the west. Coincidentally, with the establishment of the company's rule in India there was also an outburst of evangelical enthusiasm in English society which championed the cause of missionaries in India from the last decades of the eighteenth century.

This evangelical enthusiasm was again the outcome of the religious revival movement which originated with John Wesley and Whitefield, the two prominent members of methodism. The revival stemmed from overall socio-economic changes and spiritual bankruptcy which swept the decadent English society. In the era of pre-industrial revolution the relation between aristocracy and the working class was to some extent based on love and harmony. But consequent upon the industrial revolution the aristocrats began to look upon the labourers purely in terms of their selfish profit motives. There was, therefore, much cultural, psychological and moral depression among the working class. It was among the depressed working labourers that revivalist movement found its greatest adherents. The movement was thus in

55 John William Kaye, op.cit., pp.4-5.
a way the product of advancing industrialism and of
the emergence of a new ethic for a new society.58

The basic conception of revivalism was the working
of inner spiritual experience with a sudden illumination -
being born again in Christ - coming after the consciousness and repentance of sin. In short, the revivalism
generated among the people a spirit of new enthusiasm and intense moral earnestness coupled with a deep concern for the 'unsaved'. The concern for the salvation of the neglected section of the English society consequently grew into a concern for the salvation of non-Christians in other countries too.59 As a result many foreign missionary societies were formed with a view to advancing their faith in distant countries. In most cases, if the missions did not precede the colonial movement, they did follow in the heels of colonial powers. The Jesuit missionaries and to be more specific Francis Xavier did indeed come as a royal missionary, with the right to correspond direct with the king of Portugal, and with extensive powers from the Pope as his legate for the whole of the East.60 The company's attitude towards missionary work was for the most part based on expediency.

60 Stephen Neil, op.cit., pp.73-74.
with the assumption of political power in 1757 after the battle of Plassey, the company's government continued to view missionary activity in India with disfavour because of the presumed fear that missionary preaching was likely to create a hostile atmosphere which could affect the stability of the company's rule. 61

To involve government in mission and mission in government, Charles Grant, an avowed Clapham Evangelical and influential person of the Court of Directors, came out with a novel treatise 'Observation on the State of Society among the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain, particularly with respect to Morals; and the means of improving it' and placed it before the Court of Directors in 1797. Obsessed with fear concerning the events in France, Grant had prepared his treatise to counteract the French revolutionary principles and anti-Church ideas propagated by men like Thomas Paine. It is, therefore, not surprising that Grant had failed to advocate any radical new departures in his treatise. On the contrary, he expected that 'Christianity of the English sort might keep Indians passive, just as it induced contentment in the English lower order'. 62

61 Arthur Mayhew, op. cit., p.50.
His plea for Christian mission in India was thus motivated more by political conservatism than social radicalism. Conservative as he was, he fully endorsed Bishop Horne's view of the attitudes inculcated by Christianity: "In superiors, it would be equity and moderation, courtesy and affability, banignity and condescension; in inferiors, sincerity and fedelity, respect and diligence. In princes, justice, gentleness, and solicitude for the welfare of the subjects; in subjects, loyalty, submission, obedience, quietness, peace, patience and cheerfulness..." Another illusion which Grant had developed was the permanence of British rule in India. He thought that conversion of the Indian people to Christianity could help achieve permanence. Not only that. More surprising was his mystic belief that the control of India was providentially put into the hands of the British by Supreme Disposer. In short, undercurrent in Grant's treatise was an implicit exhibition of the natural alliance of the missionary movement with that of British commerce. Christianity and education would improve the earthly condition of the people. This improvement would again, Grant believed, immensely further the original and continuing purpose of the British in the East: the great beneficiary would be British commerce... 'In every progressive step of this

63 Ibid., p.13.
work, we shall also serve the original design with which we visited India, that design still so important to this country - the extension of our commerce'.

The poverty of the Indian people and their 'unformed' taste were considered to be the main obstacles which limited the penetration of British manufacturers in India. Grant was an unduly optimistic that these obstacles were to be removed by Christianity and education which were 'the noblest species of conquest'.

If Charles Grant provided knowledge and influence for the cause of missionary in India, Charles Simson at Cambridge supplied its spiritual leadership. Their influence was so profound that the first generation of the civil servants who were sent out to India were stamped with the Evangelical assurance and earnestness of purpose.

By their active patronization and initiation that a group of missionaries was sent out to India. This is not to suggest that the official policy of the company's government towards the Christian mission was relaxed. The government under Wellesley (who succeeded John Shore) went to the extent of serving 'quit notice' to all the foreigners who were not in the covenanted service. The measure was obviously directed against the

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64 Eric Stokes, *op. cit.*, p.34.
65 Charles Grant, *Observation*, p.220.
missionaries. There was, however, sometimes a shift in the government's attitude towards the missionaries. This shift came particularly when the government felt the need for support from the Christian missionaries. For instance, the College of Fort William offered teachership to William Carey and the latter immediately availed himself of the opportunity by promising the lucrative rewards for linguistic and other means of assistance that he could offer for the institution. It is ironical that the government, by appointing Carey as teacher of Bengali, later Marathi and Sanskrit as well, became an accomplice in missionary work, while simultaneously denying the missionaries legal status in India. On the other hand, Carey also readily extended his helping hand because he believed that this would not only facilitate the missionary work but also relieve them from embarrassment in getting support from the government in future. But it had a serious implication which the missionaries tended to overlook. When a missionary took up a position in a government, he became directly or indirectly a part of the colonial establishment.

It is understandable that such extended helps were a means for the extension of their missionary work. But when the missionaries demonstrated that such help would

67 *Daniel Potts*, *op.cit.*, pp.174-195.
68 Ibid., p.175.
bring about closer relationship between the rulers and
the ruled, they definitely fell in line with the govern-
ment. Edward Parry, Chairman and Grant, Vice-Chairman
of the Court of Directors, in their letter to Dundas,
President of the Board of Control argued that Christian
religion was a cementing factor between the two nations:
"If... they embrace our religion, they would have a new
cause of attachment to us .... which would give us better
assurance of their fidelity".69 Because of the presence
of few but influential pro-missionary officials, the
Company was thus made to think that the introduction of
Christianity and diffusion of its doctrines was the
government's own advantage. But the Company felt con-
cerned about the manner in which religious conversion
was to be carried out. This cautious attitude stemmed
from the primary concern for the safety and preservation
of the empire.70 Given the choice between political
stability and Christian conversion, the government
definitely preferred the former. But it was also true
that the government was not hesitant to religious con-
version where it would legitimize its control over the
subject people.

69 Bodleian MSS, Correspondence on Mission in India;
Parry and Grant to Dundas, 8 June 1807.

70 K.P. Sengupta, op.cit., p.57.
With some high-ranking officials and influential members of the Parliament behind and obviously with the unstinted support from the Evangelical party, William Wilberforce, a member of at least 70 philanthropic organisations in England, led the parliamentary struggle for the opening of India to missionary enterprise. In fact, Wilberforce received 837 petitions from different mission societies during February to June 1813 supporting the evangelical position in India. 71 During the debate for the renewal of the Charter, Wilberforce argued that the sole justification and strengthening of British control over India lay in its Christianisation of the Indian people. Falling in line with him, Fr Claudius Buchanan, then Provost of the College of Fort William, also found no other way than Christianisation for establishing an unbreakable friendship between the two peoples. In their frantic efforts to enlist government's support, permanent subjection of India to British rule even echoed in their slogans. Deeply influenced by Grant's ideas, Wilberforce appealed to his countrymen that they should do their best to strike their roots into the Indian soil by transplanting their principles, laws, institutions, and manners; above all, their religion and morals. 72

71 Ibid., p.58.
72 Stokes, op.cit., p.35.
Rallying behind the Evangelicals, the free-trade merchants in Britain also looked at the issue from the narrow commercial interest and contended that Christianity would change the habit and manner of the people thereby increasing their demand for British manufactured goods. It was this belief which provided the basis for the alliance of attitude between the missionary and the merchants. In fact, commercial and missionary opinions were two important factors which generated the colonial policy of nineteenth century English liberalism. One basic feature of this liberal outlook was the gradual abandonment of all desire for territorial power as an end. The Sunday Times summed up this desire thus: "It must be our policy to abandon altogether a narrow system of colonial aggrandisement which can no longer be pursued with advantage, and to build our greatness on a surer foundation by stretching our dominion over the wants of the universe". This is simply to put that colonial domination was to be supplemented by 'civilizing work'. The diffusion of European civilization among the vast population of the east was only a means for legitimizing their control over them. Therefore, the seemingly concern for the want of the subject people was only pharisaic.

73 Ibid., p.40.
74 Ibid., p.43.
Peter Ekeh has succinctly pointed out that the successful colonization of any country was achieved more by the colonizers' ideological justification of their rule than by the sheer brutality of arms.\(^75\) This is to say that no conquest without the support of the conquest over the mind was lasting. Macauley, who had been schooled in such thought, realized the magnitude of the conquest over the mind and commented in a flight of eloquence before the House of Commons thus: "The sceptre may pass away from us. Victory may be inconsistent to our arms. But there are triumphs which are followed by reverse. There is an empire exempt from all natural causes of decay. Those triumphs are the pacific triumphs of reason over barbarism; that empire is the imperishable empire of our arts and our morals, our literature and our laws".\(^76\) Macauley wanted to accomplish the conquest over the mind of India through the diffusion of western civilization of which Christianization and modern education were important factors that would set the natives on a process of European improvement. This would, they hoped, result in the permanence of the connection between India and England.

\(^75\) Peter Ekeh, *op. cit.*, p.96.

\(^76\) Stokes, *op. cit.*, p.45.
What the Christian missionaries had sought was the removal of the restrictions which had so long impeded the progress of missionary labour in the Company's dominion. In their attempt to achieve this objective, the Christian missionaries and their supporters had mistakenly shown in a much more enthusiastic fashion than Christ admonished his disciples to 'render therefore to Caeser the things that are Caeser's', giving the impression that as if they had been official agents of the government and pioneers of British colonial expansion. They felt that they were more competent than government officials to determine what was best for their cause, as well as for the maintenance of the British rule. They, for better or for worse, openly avowed; while unconsciously working to undermine it. 77

At long last in 1813 the British Parliament removed all restrictions on missionary activities in India. Clause XXXII of the Charter Act of 1813 allowed the freedom for propagating Christianity and with it the missionary movement entered into a crucial phase spreading even in the far-flung areas of Northeast India.

77 E. Daniel Potts, op.cit., p.204.
1.3 Early Missionary Contact with North-East India, 1836-1894

The first missionaries who had toured the Brahmaputra valley were the Jesuit missionaries, Stephen Cacells and J. Gabral. The purpose of their tour was, however, in the nature of exploratory ostensibly to find a route into China and Tibet. Later there grew up two Catholic churches; one dedicated to 'our Lady of the Rosary' and the other to 'our Lady of Guadelopce' at the Moghul garrison at Rangamati in Goalpara district of lower Assam in 1696. Basing his proposition on C. Warsell's and S.T. Martinus Nijhoff's 'Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia', F.S. Downs has maintained that the Christians in these two places might have come with the Moghul army of 63,000 men that Aurangzeb had sent against the Ahoms in 1669 or be the first fruit of the sixteenth and seventeenth Jesuit mission to the Moghuls. Whatever might be, the fact of the matter is that there were no permanent churches and even the first Christian communities in these two places disappeared soon after Goalpara was ceded to the East India

78 S.K. Bhuyan, Early British Relation with Assam (Shillong, 1948), p.3.

Company by the Moghuls in 1765.

1.3.1 British Baptist Mission Society

The first significant contact with North-East India was made by the Serampore mission of the British Baptist Missionary Society in the early part of the nineteenth century. Curiously enough, the initiative for starting missionary enterprise came from the government officials. This was so because of the realisation of the futility of the policy of military expedition which produced jealousy and suspicion culminating in endless wars of retaliation and revenge. They, therefore, expected that what could not be achieved by the military power could be gained by the power of the gospel. The officials in Assam also felt that Assam and its hills inhabited by various tribes who were not in the least influenced by Hinduism or Mohamadism offered the most promising field for the spread of Christianity. Captivated by their simplicity of manners and void of prejudices which were perhaps common among the plains people, the officials believed that they could be rendered of 'importance' to the British India. In order


81 N.K. Baroooh, David Scott in the North-East India, 1802-1831 : A Study in British Paternalism (New Delhi, 1970), p. 188.
to achieve this objective, they reiterated the need for the spread of Christianity and education among the hill people. 82 James Johnstone, the political agent of Manipur also thought in terms of the stabilisation of the British empire and regarded Christianisation of the people as the only effective means for mutually attaching them to the government. He, therefore, concluded that a large number of Christian hillmen between Assam and Burma would be a valuable prop to the British. 83

Eventually on the invitation from the British Magistrate of Sylhet, Mr William Carey of Serampore mission sent Krishna Chandra Pal, the first Serampore convert, to work among the Khasis in Sylhet who were apparently refugees from inter-tribal wars within the neighbouring Khasi kingdom in December 1813. 84 Over-enthusiastic, the magistrate even recommended outright baptism of these fugitives prior to proper religious indoctrination. The prospect was too rosy for Carey who had already undertaken the translation work of the Bible into Khasi language with the help of a Khasi pandit (in Bengali script). Carey was thus confident that Krishna Chandra Pal could have no language problem and

82 S.K. Barpujari, op.cit., p.427.
83 James Johnstone, Manipur and Naga Hills, reprinted. (New Delhi, 1971), pp.43-44.
84 F.S. Downs, op.cit., p.70.
be the right person to carry the message of Christ among
the Khasis. Krishna Pal remained in Sylhet for eight
months during which two Khasis and five natives of Assam
were baptised. These newly baptised Christians became
the nucleus of the Christian community later brought into
existence at Cherrapunji. Coincidentally, Cherrapunji
which stood in the hills just above Sylhet became the
first seat of British administration in the district.

In the meantime, David Scott, Chief Commissioner
of Assam, in his letter to Bayley, Secretary to the Govern-
ment of India on 27 April 1825, made a novel plan to the
Calcutta Council to invite missionaries to start humani-
tarian activities among the hill tribes of Assam. While
thus seeking permission to negotiate with Bishop Heber
at Calcutta for such missionary assistance, David Scott
argued that nothing permanently good could be obtained by
other means than gospelling. It does not mean that Scott
had genuine concern for the spread of the Gospel. But he
perhaps took it only a means for taming the unruly. Quite
optimistic about the success of missionary work, Scott
thus strongly pleaded that even if government’s support

85 Ibid., p.70.
86 Alexander Mackenzie, History of the Relations of
the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-
East Frontier of Bengal (Calcutta, 1884), pp.253-4.
was not immediately forthcoming, he himself would personally finance the missionary venture.\textsuperscript{87} The government apparently gave Scott the necessary permission to contact missionaries in his private capacity. But deeply impressed by the prospect of missionary work among the hill tribes, Fort William later on instructed the local officials in Assam to invite the Christian missionaries to undertake what they called a 'mission of civilization' to 'humanise' the wild tribes of the Northeast Frontier, stating that 'the government could give not only financial assistance but also salary to the people who might be employed in their capacity as missionaries.\textsuperscript{88} It should, however, be made clear that the missionaries might not have fully shared the official view which regarded Christian conversion as a means for strengthening the colonial occupation. Basically they were prompted by the desire to communicate the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ to the millions of people that dwelt in 'darkness'. Given the opportunity to do so, they were not hesitant to extend their cooperation to the government if such cooperation would enhance the extension of the kingdom of God.

\textsuperscript{87} N.K. Barooah, \textit{op.cit.}, p.177.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., p.177.
Assured of local officials' support, the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) opened a centre at Gauhati in 1829. David Scott had not only helped the mission to establish a school but also deputed a British officer in the person of James Rae, the Superintendent of Public Works for Assam to man the newly established mission station. Soon Rae began to think that he was destined to serve as missionary. Accordingly, he resigned the Company's service later on. But, aware of his incompetency, Rae preferred to go for a year's theological training at Serampore. Though theologically more equipped and assisted by Ramchandra Nath, a native worker, Rae's evangelistic work among the Bengali and Assamese inhabitants was hardly a success. The church which he had established did not fare well from the very outset. It was virtually dead. The arrival of a new missionary in the person of Rev. William Robinson failed to improve the situation. Finding no other alternative, James Rae and Rev. William Robinson left the mission for government service. Perhaps they had no strong conviction which could help them withstand the hard realities of life that normally befell the pioneer missionaries.

89 F.S. Downs, op.cit., pp.72-73.
90 Ibid., pp.72-73.
Not disheartened by their failure in the Brahmaputra valley, the Serampore Mission endeavoured to strengthen the work which had been started by Krishna Chandra Pal at Cherrapunji. In 1833, Alexander B. Lish, an Anglo-Indian missionary, followed by Joshua Roe landed at Cherrapunji. It should be noted that the Khasi field was the twenty-first centre which the Serampore Mission had opened in India when the mission was no longer financially sound. Combining evangelism with school, Alexander Lish and Joshua Roe opened three schools in different places which were definitely beyond their means. Because of financial constraint and inadequacy of man-power followed by the death of Joshua Marshman, one of the Serampore trio, the Serampore Mission decided to abandon both the Khasi and the Assam fields. In 1841, the American Baptist mission which had recently established a station in upper Assam, took over the lower Assam and the Welsh Presbyterian Mission stepped into the Khasi field.

1.3.2 American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society

The primary objective of the American Baptist Mission was to open a mission in China. The interest in 'China Mission' had been remarkably aroused by the publication of Charles Gutzlaff's 'Journal of Two Voyages

91 Ibid., p.73.

along the Coast of China in 1834. Charles Gutzlaff was no doubt aware of the Chinese government's opposition against the entry of foreigners in China but he projected the picture that the Chinese people, on the whole, were not averse to Christianity. The American Baptists thus expected that a chain of mission stations would be established among kindred races, commencing in Siam and stretching through the Tenasserim provinces and the British empire into Assam, thereby encircling the western frontiers of China with influences and agencies that must sooner or later penetrate into hitherto impassable barriers of China. As a part of Central Asian strategy, the American Baptists began to develop a fascinating interest in China. Their subsequent involvement in Northeast India was only an accident or at most a part of this 'Asian strategy'. But they were not clear as to how the plan of 'China Mission' was to be executed. Their approach to China through their mission station in Bangkok being not practicable, they embarked on to fulfil this project through the Shan mission in northern Burma.  

Local situation also favoured this venture. Mr. A.C. Bruce, who had been instrumental in the establishment of

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experimental tea-plantation near Sadiya, had prepared the ground and convinced Francis Jenkins (successor of David Scott) to invite the missionaries. Accordingly, Jenkins forwarded Bruce's letter to Charles Trevelyan, one of the prominent young Turks of the Company in Calcutta.95 Utilitarian by background, Trevelyan advocated the introduction of western civilization in India. But it would be wrong to assume that Trevelyan had no fundamental religious interest. In fact, he combined in himself the fusion of the evangelical and radical outlook. Macaulay's letter to his sister, Margaret, on 7 December 1834 testified the fact that Trevelyan's own religious feelings were ardent, like all his feelings, even to enthusiasm.96

The missionary's nationality was sometimes quite important and Charles Trevelyan's choice naturally fell on the British Baptists. William H. Pearce of Baptist Missionary Society at Calcutta informed the government that his mission had recently opened two fields at Cherrapunji and Gauhati and therefore was not in a position to undertake a new field. He, however, suggested that the government should invite the American Baptists in Burma.97 Jenkins, Trevelyan and Pearce thus jointly

appealed to the American Baptists in Burma stressing the great opportunities mission station at Assam would provide.

At times Jenkins would correspond even to the home board in America by making proposals for new work sweetened with offers of financial assistance. Jenkins thus exercised tremendous influence upon the working of the American Baptist mission at least in its initial stage. On the other hand the mission also had benefited from the support of government officials.

The American Baptists readily accepted the offer because they saw in it the prospect of opening the 'gateway to the Celestial Empire' at no distant future. According to them, the proposed station, which was hoped to act as a highway to Tibet and Western China, would enhance its value from a missionary as well as from a political and commercial point of view. They hoped to accompany the government team to China via Assam route to make enquiry about the culture of the tea-plant and then carry the Gospel to the Chinese people beneath the protection afforded by the East India Company. It was this double interest both in the China Mission and the Shan Mission which ultimately dragged them to open a station at Sadya at the extreme eastern end of the Brahmaputra valley.

98 F.S. Downs, op.cit., p.675.
99 D.M. Albaugh, op.cit., p.49.
100 Gammel, op.cit., p.216.
The American Baptists thus immediately designated two of their missionary families, the Nathan Browns and the Oliver Cutters, for the Sadya station. Cutter was a printer and Jenkins offered Rs 2000/- for the installation of a printing press. The objective of the mission was thus to use Sadya as a base because it was connected with Yunnan in China. It is to be noted that the Sadya station was only a part of the Asian strategy for evangelizing the Shans and then the Chinese.\(^{101}\) The vision of a coordinated evangelistic enterprise extending throughout central Asia made it difficult for the missionaries to sensibly organize the much humbler work of evangelizing the Assamese. Unaware of the realistic situation, they were more concerned with the Shan or Chinese birds in the distant bush than the Assamese birds in hand.\(^{102}\) The 'Asian strategy' was ill-planned because the Singphos and the Khamtis among whom they started working had hardly any contact with Burma. Moreover, the Khamtis and the Singphos could not come to terms with the British. Therefore, political instability on the Assam-Burma borders

\(^{101}\) Ibid., pp.211-212.

greatly shattered Brown's hope and made him to think that the whole strategy seemed to be blasted.\textsuperscript{103}

Because of the unfriendly attitude of the Singphos and the Khamtis, Bronson began to look towards the Namsanghean Nagas of Tirap division of North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). Both within the government officials and the mission board, the plan met with widespread support. Captain Hannay, the British Commander, endorsed the scheme because such work would contribute directly or indirectly to the British policy of pacifying the Naga tribes without having to assume direct administrative control over them.\textsuperscript{104} Jenkins also took personal interest in Bronson's pioneering work among the Nagas and went to the extent of imploring the home board to reinforce the Namshang work. In fact, the local officials had contributed to a total of Rs. 1,890/- for various aspects of the Namshang project. The warm official response was, however, negated by the compromising attitude of Bronson who succumbed to his colleagues' ruling that regarded the Brahmaputra valley as the 'land of Cananites flowed with honey and milk' because of its fairly stable political condition with better medical facilities and communications.\textsuperscript{105} In the meantime, a serious controversy raged

\textsuperscript{103} D.M. Albaugh, \textit{op.cit.}, p.52.


\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., pp.25-26.
between the missionaries on the field and the home board which greatly jeopardised the progress of the missionary work in the Brahmaputra valley. The latter failed to specify a clear framework within which its missionaries were to work, but vaguely laid down that whatever be the area or situation, evangelism should follow the New Testament pattern and the missionary had to work in a manner approved by the board in advance.\textsuperscript{106} The board also questioned even the validity of education as an essential part of evangelism. It appeared that the controversy centred more on the financial constraint due to American Civil War which was reinforced by the unfruitful work of the missionaries on the fields. The unsettled condition of the country, the missionaries' failing health and their frequent removal from place to place contributed to the slow progress of converts, while on the home front, debts accumulated upon the mission's treasury which heavily told upon the progress of the missionary work on the field.\textsuperscript{107} Like the central Asian strategy, the plan for evangelising the Brahmaputra valley was launched with ambitious plans and extravagant hopes but with no sufficient resources. However committed they might be,

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., pp.40 and 42.

the twentytwo missionaries could win only 50 Assamese souls during twentyfive years of work. The number of converts and students studying in mission schools sharply declined. This made the prospects of mission's work in the Brahmaputra valley more gloomy. As a result, the question of abandoning Assam mission was even contemplated. But the marvellous response of Garos to the preaching of two native workers, Omed and Ramkhi (the first Garo converts) and the baptism of about thirty-seven people at the hands of Bronson on 14 and 15 April 1867 had reactivised the lack-lustrous Assam mission. It also did indicate the shape of things to come in the hill regions for which the missionaries had shown little or no interest then.

Moved by this event, the Naga work which was abandoned in 1841 was revived, but this time among the Ao Nagas by F.W. Clark, a missionary to the Sibsagar mission in 1871. Mr Clark was primarily preoccupied with the works among the tea-garden labourers in the beginning and his subsequent interest in Naga work was more an accident than deliberate. Godhula Brown, an Assamese


evangelist, was instrumental in the preparation of the groundwork for the planting of Christianity in Naga hills. Godhula's evangelistic zeal was mixed with adventurism. Against Clark's advice, Godhula ventured to hills at too great risk. Godhula's greatest disadvantage was that he was regarded as a 'subject man' and 'a Company man', meaning that one living under English rule. Undaunted, Godhula proclaimed himself as teacher of a new religion, and declared this to be his sole errand. Impoverished by famine, pestilence and inter-tribal war involving many and costly sacrifices, the Nagas could hardly afford to have one good meal a day. In the failure of their own Gods to give them help, the people naturally looked towards the supreme God who, Godhula told them, was the 'Bread of Life'. Following their baptism, Clark wanted to open a permanent mission centre among the Ao Nagas who were then placed under an "unadministered area". He sought the permission of the Government of India through Col. Hopkinson, the Commissioner of Assam, who was a bit reluctant to recommend the case because of the recent enactment of the 'Inner Line Regulation'. For this reason, the British officer did

111 Ibid., pp.11-12.
112 Ibid., pp.11-12.
not advocate even the penetration of British traders into such areas. To justify his stand, Hopkinson pointed out that even during his short stay in Assam the missionaries on two occasions with their new converts formed settlement and planted tea gardens which they afterwards sold to joint-stock companies.\textsuperscript{114} The Commissioner expected that Rev. Clark would not do the same thing, but he failed to make 'invidiousness of drawing a distinction between a planter and a missionary, and telling the one he must stop at a line which the other may transgress'.\textsuperscript{115} At his own risk and with no assurance of protection from British, Clark was permitted to find a settlement among the Nagas. The faint hope of evangelising the whole Asia still lingered and the Naga mission was looked upon not simply as of and for the Nagas alone, but rather a part of a great system to reach the Mongolian people of Asia.\textsuperscript{116}

1.3.3 The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission Society (WCMFMS)

At the outset, the Welsh Mission operated through the London Missionary Society (1795) which was a conglomeration of Anglicans, Welsh Presbyterians and Congregationalists (Independents).\textsuperscript{117} Since the Congregationalists

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., p.430
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., p.430.
\textsuperscript{116} Gordon E. Pruett, "Christianity, History and Culture in Nagaland" in Contributions to Indian Sociology, no.8, 1974, p.94.
\textsuperscript{117} Presbyterians believe that the government and discipline of the Church rest with the 'presbyters' or 'elders' gathered in a synod. Congregationalists believe in the fundamental principle that every congregation is an independent body. Baptists believe in adult baptism by full immersion.
dominated the London Missionary Society, the Welsh Presbyterians felt that they simply funded the society without sharing responsibility. The specific issues which widened the breach were the conflicting opinions on church polity and recruitment policy of missionary. One such example was the outright rejection of any missionary candidates from Presbyterians and the only disqualification seemed their being methodists. Because sectarian feeling within the component members of the London Missionary Society and want of greater responsibility, the Welsh Mission ultimately broke away from the society to form what is known as the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission Society (WCMFMS) in 1840 with an objective to infuse clearer sense of responsibility and greater liberality among its workers. Since then, the Welsh missionaries criss-crossed various continents and definitely India was one of their chosen fields.

As regards the specific area of operation, Dr Wilson of Scottish Presbyterian church, who had already been in India, suggested Gujarat, whereas Jacob Tomlin, an ex-missionary of London Missionary Society in India suggested


three places, namely, Khasia-Jaintia hills, Manipur and Malour in Central India, giving, of course, first priority to the Khasia hills. Prior to his departure to England, Jacob Tomlin projected to work his way to China through Assam and on failing to do so, went to the Khasi hills and stayed at Cherrapunji for some time. The Welsh mission accepted Tomlin's suggestion and the compelling factor that informed the decision was the growing political stability in the hills coinciding with the British Baptist Mission's decision to abandon their Khasi field. Thomas Jones from Montgomeryshire, who landed on 22 June 1841, soon established a mission station at Cherrapunji. When the capital of Assam was officially shifted to Shillong in 1866, the Welsh Mission also thought it expedient to move to the new capital.

With the gradual consolidation of their hold over Khasi hills partly because of the generous help from government in the form of financial grant and partly because of friendly attitude of some Khasi rajas, plans were afoot to extend the mission's area of operation even beyond the Khasi hills. One such field was the turbulent Lushai hills which eventually became one of the major fields of Welsh Mission soon after the former had come under the sway of British imperialism in 1891.

120 J. Fortis Jyrve, op. cit., p.20.
121 Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in North East India, Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1926-1976, p.5.