CONCLUSION
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The arrival of Christian Missionaries in the South Travancore ushered a new era of socio-economic-political changes. After the renaissance in Europe, the Catholic and Protestant Missionaries came to South Travancore to disseminate the Message of Christianity and to effect Educational and Social Reforms.

Catholic Christianity had a promising fortune with the arrival of St. Xavier in the year 1543. Having his headquarters at Kottar, he succeeded in converting a sizable number of the fishermen community.

The Raja of Travancore accorded full permission to the Jesuit fathers to preach Christianity in all parts of South Travancore, to baptize any one who asked for it and to build churches in all places where they thought necessary. They were highly successful in spreading Christianity by building churches along the coastal areas.

Churches were grouped together under a central administrative system called diocese. Bishop was the head of the diocese. In the initial stage, the Europeans were appointed Bishops and gradually Indians were also appointed as Bishops to look after the administration of the churches.
The year 1905 is regarded as the Golden Period. Since Rev. Bensigar period divided the diocese into various ecclesiastical units in order to have an effective administration. During his period, the number of Catholics in the diocese increased day by day.¹

The 1981 census proclaims that there were 2,80,669 Catholics in Kottar diocese. It consisted of 84 parishes, 296 churches, 58 nunneries and 218 Missionary centres. There were 239 priests and 21 monks to render religious services in Kottar diocese.²

Today Catholics are used to high thinking, hardliving and strong fighting. The dream of daring great adventures at the service of God and men are in them, relentless spirit of work and action urges them to generous needs. Nobility, heroism and chivalry are their glorious patrimony.³

The Protestant Christianity in South Travancore is the story of the people striving for emancipation through spiritual means. It is a socio-political and religio-cultural struggle.

² Diocese of Kottar, Nanjil Publishers, Nagercoil, 1985, p.3.
³ Ibid.
Protestant Missionaries became active from the year 1806. Rev. W.T.Ringletaube of Prussia, belonging to the LMS, started Missionary work actively in the year 1806 in this region. The Protestant Missionaries did not stop with spreading Christianity alone. They showed interest in solving some of the social problems.

Rev. Vedamanikam, Rev. V.Arumanayagam, Rev. N.Devadasan and Rev. Yesudian were the pioneer Catechists in South Travancore. The Political power and influence of the British, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, played a vital role in establishing of the Protestant Missionary societies in this region.

The Centenary Celebration of the LMS marked the birth of the South Travancore Native Evangelistic Society. In 1912, it was renamed as the Travancore Home Missionary Society.

The Protestant Church of Kanyakumari diocese was formally inaugurated on June 1, 1959. The diocese comprised all the churches of Kanyakumari district, which had 277 churches and forty presbyters in active service. The three fold ideas of self-support, self-government

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and self-propagation were accepted as the norms of the future church.

The Christian Education, Youth Programmes, Communication and Human Resources Development are clubbed under the Directorate of Youth ministry. Sunday school materials, youth group study materials, vacation Bible school materials are prepared for the diocese by this department.

From the inception of the diocese the work among women has been very effectively done. In addition to the traditional programmes, creative programmes are also undertaken. Some of the ongoing women's programmes generated employment opportunities for women. Some rehabilitation programmes are also launched out, including employment opportunities for the housewives, generated by cottage industry.

The British Residents too evinced keen interest in the spread of Christianity. The Protestant Missionaries were utilised by the British Residents either favourably or unfavourably situations. The connection
between the Resident and the CMS Missionaries prevailed for many decades. The Missionaries received many privileges from the British Residents.

Col. Macaulay, Col. John Munro and Gen. William Cullen were the important British Residents at the court of Travancore, who utilised their official position and influence to spread Christianity in South Travancore.

The friendship between the Missionaries and the British Residents, on many occasions helped the Missionaries to fight successfully for the rights of their converts. At the sametime the Protestant Christians were very often looked upon as friends of the Britisher.

Col. Munro rendered much help to South Travancore. He took keen interest in abolishing several taxes which made unprivileged classes to embrace Christianity. He gave protection to Christian Missionaries when they were under attack by the local Hindus. He won the confidence of the unprivileged people and became their spokesman. To them, he was the new Moses with the tablets of the new law, a figure, a new moral force.
The history of Education in the South Travancore dates back to the early days of the nineteenth century when Missionaries stepped out into shores and established schools to educate the illiterate masses that was steeped in ignorance and darkness.

The Protestants took keen interest in the instruction and diffusion of English Education here. The Portuguese and Dutch who came to the South Travancore state, even prior to the British, were Roman Catholics and they did little towards the cause of Education. But the Protestant Missionaries who arrived later were the first to introduce English education in the state. They founded schools, seminaries and colleges in adjacent to churches and chapels. The Missionaries opened the eyes of the depressed classes and felt the necessity to better themselves through education.

Rev.W.T.Rignletaube established the first English school in the state of Travancore in 1809 at Mylaudy where twelve students were first admitted. The wives of the Missionaries Rev. Charles M'd and Rev.Charles Mault, after much effort, established hostels for girls where

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5 Kumaradhas,M., *op.cit.*, p.32.
they could stay and pursue their studies. After completing their studies these girls were engaged in teaching in the schools that were opened in the neighbouring villages. This improved the socio-economic status and thus became a torch bearer of social reforms and economic development.

The middle of the nineteenth century witnessed the growth of schools by leaps and bounds and in 1861, there were 188 institutions including four schools exclusively set apart for the education of girls. Towards the close of the nineteenth century there were 284 Mission schools and in the year 1893 the foundation for the first Scott Christian College was laid at Nagercoil.6

The turn of the twentieth century did not augur well for Mission schools. The Travancore Education Code curbed the independent functioning of institutions and remained an obstacle. Christians were not allowed to teach the scriptures during working hours and they were not permitted to use the church to house the classes. As a consequence, Christians had to close down fifty seven schools. In 1946 and 1947 the

scheme for compulsory primary education was introduced and Government's grant for schools was curtailed. This resulted in surrendering Christian schools to the Government, which to our dismay, marred the progress of Christian education.

These dark clouds are slowly but surely vanishing and today Christians are looking forward to the establishment of institutions for higher academic and technical studies. As per the report of the year 2000 there are fifteen Higher Secondary schools, four High schools, four Middle schools, eight Primary schools, five English medium schools, one school for blind, one for the deaf and dumb and three colleges managed by the Protestant Missionaries.

The Christian colleges played its part in training young people to migrate to overseas and to all over the country in search of new positions and jobs.

The effect of Education on the converts, particularly depressed classes, was very great indeed. Conversion to Christianity created in them a remarkable eagerness for education which in turn facilitated their entry into occupations which had hitherto been closed to them, and improved their economic status and social prestige of the group as a whole.
Now, Kanyakumari district has been ranked first in Tamil Nadu in education. This is because of the Missionaries who have laid strong foundation in education. They provide education to all regardless of caste, creed and religious discrimination.

Medical Mission in Kanyakumari was first started at Nagercoil in the year 1838. The medical Missionaries and Evangelist rendered both medical as well as ecclesiastical works.

In the field of medical care, the LMS did a considerable amount of work in South Travancore after 1838. The aim of the Medical Mission was two fold, in the first place, to offer gratuitous advice and assistance to all applicants without distinction, and in the second place, to bring the Missionary into close contact with all classes of the community. Medical work was appreciated by all irrespective of caste or creed, and much help was received from the South Travancore as well as from the non-Christians.

In the midst of modernisation, diversification and specialisation, it should never be forgotten that the Christian principles are based on the mission hospitals. Health care has been an integral part of the mission work. Now medical mission runs six hospitals with forty four
doctors. The Christian college of Nursing, Neyyoor, Christian college of Physiotherapy, Colachel and Christian college of Pharmacy, Santhapuram are run by the Kanyakumari medical mission.  

The medical service rendered by the Christian institutions in Kanyakumari district is noteworthy. They cared for all people and provided free medical services to the poor. Their relentless medical service has greatly diminished the mortality rate in Kanyakumari region.

There were innumerable social evils that bogged the society in seventeenth century and the status of the low caste and other downtrodden including women was extremely in bad taste.

At the dawn of modern period, the people of this region languished under the theocratic state. In the caste ridden society, the position of the low castes was in miserable condition. Social evils such as slavery, slave trade, child marriage, polygamy, polyandry and indignity of dress code imposed on women, put them in a deplorable condition. The social customs, religious dogmas and caste stigma strangled the people.

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Due to the influence of the Christian Missionaries, many social evils that were prevalent among the people were gradually eradicated.

Christian Missionaries were the champions of the low caste population. Whenever the converts under their control faced the problems, they represented it to the officials and the Government. The work of the Missionaries, in the religious, educational and social fields -however was one of the factors which created a new awareness among the people to struggle for their betterment.

The Christian Missionary ladies daringly entered the caste homes and courageously fought against ignorance and illiteracy of the women and helped the much distressed ones to inhale the air of emancipation and independence for the first time in their lives.

The Christian Missionaries opened many schools and hospitals. They helped them to come into direct contact with the problems of different castes of people, especially that of women.

The myth that education was the preserve of the high caste was thus demolished by the establishment of educational institutions. Barriers like improverishment and prejudices against women were removed.
The newly formed Church of South India-Kanyakumari diocese with its Indian leadership continue to strengthen this aspect of the life of the people. The establishment of women's Christian colleges is a proof to the diocese's resolve to play an effective role in mustering the potentials of its women.

Women do take an active part in the service-particularly in rural churches-reading the lessons, praying or taking the offertory. In the diocesan council, of the over 700 members, around ten are women. In the executive committee, out of twenty eight members, three are women. The women's fellowship of the diocese's are well organised, in which every parish have an effective women's fellowship unit.  

Thus the Christian Missionaries have successfully eradicated all the superstitious or beliefs from the very face of Kanyakumari region. With the influence of Christian Missionaries, the communal harmony has been restored. Women are treated on par with men. They enjoy all the privileges with ease. The caste prejudices have been subdued. The ideals of oneness and fraternity are achieved in the society.

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The prospects of Christianity in South Travancore (the present Kanyakumari district) at present, are more assuring than ever. Silently and steadily it advances in spite of the great obstacles thrown in its way. The selfless efforts of various Christian Missionaries have borne fruit resulting in the alleviation of social evils, development of education and upliftment of the masses in general. It resulted in the restructuring of the socio-economic and political scenario of the South Travancore. The leaven of Christianity is today pervading throughout the length and breadth of the South Travancore and the evolution of things also point to that distant vision of the Christian seer.