Introductory Note

In selecting this area of research in missions I have been delving into a subject which has long interested me. General histories, published till 1970s simply referred to overseas missions as humanitarian, educational, philanthropic and social in context. It was rarely acknowledged by them that the missionary activity contributed to imperial expansion of the British. However, in the early 70s interdisciplinary study in the social sciences developed new approach. This led to research into the political significance of religion. This significance was explored initially in British politics. Unambiguously, it was recognized that the British imperial history could not be fully understood without giving detailed attention to the varieties of Christian belief. The 19th century missionary impulse to ensure religious involvement in the interests of the Empire was important for this. The Foreign mission societies: Church Missionary Society (CMS), London Missionary Society (LMS), Free Church Mission of Scotland (FMS), Wesleyan Missionary Society (WMS), all arose as an extension of it. Interestingly, there was one British missionary sect which distanced itself from the stigma of imperialism. This is the theme of this thesis: the Brethren movement in Andhra pursued a religious course that was not linked to the imperialist agenda. No researcher, so far, paid attention towards this area. This is entirely a new study.

I deal with missionary activity in a broader historical perspective in the initial chapters. Then a close study of distinctive tenets of the Brethren movement in Andhra from the non-imperialist viewpoint, to follow in the succeeding chapters.
Significance: - The theme of the thesis is embedded in the past two hundred years of Protestant missionary activity in India. As in the recent decades the explosion of writing by historians, which mostly concentrated on debates such as missions and modernity, missions and imperialism etc., focused more sharply on Protestant than on Catholic Christianity. The reason, as this volume investigates, was largely due to a Protestant evangelical phenomenon called the ‘evangelicalism’, which was intrinsically associated to the rapid expansion of Christian missionary activity in the 19th century to Asia and Africa. The ‘Enlightenment’, as most historians observed, created this evangelical version (evangelicalism) of Protestantism. Hence forth evangelicalism, the particular blend of the doctrines of grace, the canons of empiricism and common sense philosophy has come to be known as the key that unlocked ‘liberal theology’ in Christianity, which, in turn, contributed to contradictory trends making the British Christians arrogant, racist and imperialistic. This also endowed CMS (Church Missionary Society), LMS (London Missionary Society), Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), Wesleyan Missionary Society (WMS) missionaries etc., with notions like non-Westerns were ‘heathens’, lost in the degradation of sin, and with a belief in the superiority and liberating potential of ‘western civilization’. These philosophical emphases, as my investigation goes, current in the Enlightenment were responsible for the way the evangelical missionaries in India addressed and encountered the non-Christian faiths and cultures. Stephen Neill, writing the first extensive study of colonialism from a missiological viewpoint, suggests, ‘all the West has done tends to be interpreted in terms of aggression’ (Neill,1966:12). That aggression encompasses political, economic, social and intellectual, the ‘most dangerous of all forms of aggression’ was missions. In fact, knowingly or not, missionaries were
pioneers of western colonial expansion as well as supporters of imperialism. Missionaries often enjoyed the benefits of power while serving in regions under the control of colonial empire.

This first phase missionary enterprise, by Denominational missionary societies: Church Missionary Society (CMS), London Missionary Society (LMS), Free Church Mission of Scotland (FMS), Wesleyan Missionary Society (WMS), was followed in the second phase by the ‘Faith missions’ such as the Brethren movement in India. Missionaries of this Christian group, now quite large in Andhra, avoided the pitfalls of colonialism in their sect. Changing the face of Evangelicalism from liberal theology (for example British Christianity) into fundamental theology (Apostolic Christianity) was the doctrinal theme of the Brethren missionaries. Moreover, the mingling of religion and state was strictly forbidden by these Calvinist ideologues. The Brethren spirituality had expounded extreme Calvinism in its most uncompromising and aggressive form and that they took no voluntary or active part in the government, politics, or conflicts of any one nation under imperial obligation. They took the teaching of separation from the world as an important doctrinal and practical tenet. British civilisation was “worldly” for them. It was inconsistent with Brethren theology which was critical of all human cultures, including Western culture, as hopelessly tainted by the Fall. Also, the Brethren missionary writings provide some good solid evidence for spiritual rather than imperialist language. I further probe the indigenous missionary movement by Indian initiative, followed after the Indianised Christian worship and service, as was the fruit of the Brethren movement in Andhra. The final argument of my investigation suggests the anti-imperialist idealism of the Brethren missionaries, and their support of indigenous leadership. Indigenisation
opens the door for the layman’s creative participation in the form of Christian assemblies at several villages and all the towns in Andhra, thus cutting across rural and urban divides.

In this study the researcher is concerned with the following objectives which essentially involves:

**Objectives:**

1. The study explores contradictory social and ideological complexities of British Christianity and missionary activities, in relation to distinct but significantly interconnected arenas in British politics, both domestic and imperial.

2. The study investigates the extent of the politically oriented Christianity or Christian imperialism that used the imperial state’s constitutional and legal apparatus.

3. The study examines why and how the Denominational missions viz., CMS, LMS, BMS, WMS etc. contributed towards the lack of success in bringing about totally indigenous churches or promoting indigenous leadership.

4. The final objective appraisal of the study is to show the extent to which the truly independent, anti-imperialist and anti-racist Brethren missionaries promoted independent and indigenous assemblies with indigenous leadership. The study examines two case studies of Brethren missionaries in Andhra, who contributed to this indigenizing process.

**Scope:**

The missionary enterprise earlier to 19th century is also touched upon. This work is placed in the early 19th century when the first Brethren missionary, A.N. Groves and his associates arrived in India about 1833. A detailed description of Brethren missionaries, together with the demographic trend, is set out to support my basic
argument. 1969 is the end of the work when the Canadian Brethren missionary, Silas Fox, left India in that year.

**Chapterization:** - In the first two chapters the diffusion of Christianity and other ideologies are dealt in detail. Particularly British Christianity held strategic for the civil and military structures connected with India and the Empire. These Christian imperialists, formally connected to religion, were more concerned with power and material interest, and religion to them was mere ideological justification for furthering imperial urge. Therefore, chapter one and two, examine encounters between Asian and Western people from the Portuguese to the 20th century. The development of Orientalism and Occidentalism as justifications for the colonial rule over the Indian sub-continent are important sub-texts to the growth of missionary activities over this region. Therefore, I evaluate further the strategies and methods of missionaries used for evangelism. This work scrupulously observes changes in missionary approach of the Indian traditional people precipitated by constant contextual pressures. I also hold that it was the missionaries’ failure to contextualize Christianity to Indian religious life that saw the rise of 19th century socio-religious movements in Hinduism. Indianization of Christianity is further discussed.

In Chapter three, how the Reformation, and the Religious Revival of the mid-eighteenth century, impacted on the organization and the advent of the Christian missions to India, and how Men and women of Victorian era fired with one potent reason, the ‘Gospel of Christ’ forsook all comfort and secure home environments reached the people of distant lands, are narrated in the light of missionaries’ commitment, passion and vision.
Chapter four deals with the ways in which the missions began their activities among the indigenous people, guided by their evangelical ideologies. Further I discuss thoroughly the response and the resistance from the side of traditional Hindus towards missionary conversions. An account for the political, economic, and socio-religious conditions of the people of the area and how the missions expanded and consequently pioneered the mass education in technology and the professions and thus opened avenues for an Andhra Renaissance is also given.

Chapter five explores one mysterious phenomenon called ‘Evangelicalism’, which swept England and Europe in the early 19th century. This was also time Evangelicalism was challenged by the Enlightenment thought and the consequent crisis of faith. However, the movement was endowed with the high participation of middleclass and Low Church wing, and very particularly of laymen. This is a kind of ‘theology of Liberation’, which very much affected the trends in Dalit liberation theology of India. The Brethren movement, though wholly the product of increased participation by laypeople in nineteenth-century evangelicalism, spawned in it, a fundamental approach to fight against the Enlightenment thought.

In chapter six, I make a lengthy study of the ways in which, in the early 19th century, the fundamental Brethren movement within the Church of England continued to reminisce the 1st century Apostolic Christianity. This fundamental movement raised in the early 19th century, imperatively stood for ecclesiastical fulfillment and could hold faith against the enlightenment thought that ranged across philosophical, social and psychological domains for the ‘faithful’. The ‘Faith mission’ movement, the extension of Protestant evangelism into India was a part of this. Chapter seven, therefore, examines
the biographical studies of two individual Brethren missionaries of the Faith mission who were led to distance themselves from the identification of imperial and British interests and who were instrumental in the unusual phenomena of promoting Indianised Christian Groups and training indigenous leadership in Andhra. Thus the scope of this study will be to the extent that it may contribute to the spontaneous growth of independent and indigenous churches in Andhra under ‘native’ leadership.

The focus of the study is also on the Indian Christians, and upon religious and social backgrounds of Indian Christians, which might explain their conversion. The study also sees, as to was there any thing susceptible to something like intellectualism or western culture that drew some towards Christianity. More attention is paid upon these issues in this thesis.

Several books provide a significant resource of the present work, particularly on British imperialism from a missiological viewpoint, towards fresh thinking on missions. The study is also based on the archival resources, which are of two categories: 1. Government records 2. Missionary Reports, Manuals, Periodicals and Diaries.

Some vital sources, which are immensely useful for the present study involves: 1. Reports of the administration of the Madras Presidency 2. Manual of the administration of the Madras Presidency 3. District Collectorate Records (Pre-mutiny) and other district annual reports 4. Census Reports of Madras Presidency 5. Report of Fort St. George, survey and settlement reports, Revenue, Legislature, Judiciary departments provide useful information. District Gazetteer by Hemmingway, the Madras District Gazetteer and Lady Hope’s detailed book on ‘General Arthur Cotton’ are some
other valuable works on Brethren movement in Andhra, in which the initial role played by Sir Arthur Cotton is recorded. Reports of Director of Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency and the Reports of Administration of the Madras Presidency speak volumes of the system of missionary education and their influences on the curriculum. The necessary documents will be obtained at National and State Archives and relevant libraries and research centers.

This study will explore the base of Global Christian and mission research resources including databases, libraries, archives, special collections, institutions, and current research in the field. The specialist libraries of Christian Theological Colleges and seminaries located at Hyderabad, Bangalore, Madras etc., which have specialist archives with missionary reports, journals and magazines, the CMS-Foreign division, South India mission at the University of Birmingham special collection department, Main library and JRLM Brethren Archives, University of Manchester, and BGC Archives, Wheaton, Illinois, are of useful assistance to this study. In addition, a great deal of attention is paid to gather sources through group or individual interviews with religious functionaries, community leaders, which I feel, is an effective method for my research. The memoirs, Diaries, Biographies and other literary works of vernacular Telugu of the missionaries and Indian Christians are also used.