CONCLUSION

Among the various Christian denominations worked in South Travancore the London Missionary Society commands a pre-eminent position by virtue of its commitment to the cause of the people who were reduced to the status of slaves. Though the advent of Christian faith in this part of the Indian sub continent even from the days of St. Thomas, one of the twelve disciplines of Jesus Christ the Christian faith gathered momentum among the common people only through the services of the protestant missionaries. After a careful observation of the people, he came to the conclusion that, Protestantism would make rapid progress among them and submitted a report on the state of Christianity in Travancore requesting the Madras Government to patronize it. But the government refused to patronize Christianity. Even then, Col. Munro was very much impressed by the small group of LMS Christians of Mailadi, which was formed and nursed by William Tobias Ringeltaube, the first missionary since 25th April 1806.

Ringeltaube could achieve great success in converting the caste Hindus and Dalits in to Christianity. He could change the social and moral
degradation of the society. He also raised the standard of life and morality of the people of South Travancore. The main objectives of the missionaries of the LMS tried to make known the glad tidings of the gospel and give everyone the opportunity of learning it to maintain an affectionate and watchful care over their congregations to organize and educate an earnest and aggressive local church, by which agency alone the eventual evangelization of the state could be hoped for and to shatter the barriers that obstructed the free spread of the gospel.

The LMS in Travancore had a humble beginning since 1806. The early missionaries found it very difficult to convert the people. The first congregation formed by them at Mailai belonged to the Paraya (Dalit) community. The successor of Ringeltaube, Rev. Charles Mead, ‘The Master Workman’, spoon-fed the fledgling mission and made it into an extensive organization. Only with the hardwork of Rev. Mead, the suppressed Nadars joined Christianity. He organized the LMS mission in South Travancore and made it more stable.

The LMS in South Travancore gave social relief to the suppressed people like Parayas, Pulayas, Ezhavas and Nadars. Mass-conversion or
Mass-movement created an awareness to the Nadars, and they embraced Christianity. The lower classes in general, found that the missionaries and their agents were sincere friends, ardent religious instructors, helpers in times of sickness, faithful advisers in difficulty and mediators in litigious quarrels.

The Travancore Mission of the LMS, contributed a lot for the social changes in the 19th century. The missionaries came to India with a heritage of social activism and with a zeal to reform and regenerate the life of the people among whom they served. They liberated the low class people from sin, ignorance, false religion and oppressive social practices. They took a strong stand against caste distinctions within the churches. Their influence penetrated deep into the social tissue and cut at the root of the social system. They brought tremendous changes in the character, life and habits of the people. They denounced the age old religious beliefs, ceremonies, social and economic institutions dress and mode of living, as primitive and paganistic in conception. By their condemnation of well-entrenched institutions like lace industries and embroidery industries, the missionaries weakened the social and economic order.
The LMS missionaries realized that a sound system of education was an absolute necessity for the spreading of Christianity and progress of society. It was the missionaries of the LMS who started the English schools in Travancore. Their system of education contributed to the emancipation of the depressed classes. This was the first time in the history of Travancore that the educational process was democratized. The missionaries admitted children in schools without caste distinctions. Education considerably enhanced their status as well as their economic condition. The missionaries instilled in them a feeling of self-awareness through their system of education. The western education gave a feeling of self-awareness, independent thought and action. This feeling helped them to develop their feeling of individuality and get rid of their feeling of inferiority. The educational work of the missionaries had also a levelling effect upon society. The high as well as low caste people sat together in a class room without caste distinction.

The missionaries of the LMS fought for the removal of restrictions on the covering of the breast of ladies. They liberated the Christian women, in the matter of dress. Industry is another area, where the missionaries did inviolable service for the emancipation of women and
their empowerment. Though the children were taught the basics of lace and embroidery work at schools, when industries were started, those who came to join were illiterate women.

A new field of industry, which was entirely different from lace and embroidery, was the establishment of printing press and printing of tracts, magazines and books and it also made tremendous change in the people of south Travancore. The tracts, magazines and books helped to create social awareness against the pathetic condition and bondage of the low caste people.

The LMS missionaries wanted to do away with caste distinctions, the hotbed of all socio-economic evils of South Travancore, which even plagued the Christian churches. They taught that all are equal in Christ and introduced the system of social meetings in order to strike at the caste demon at the grass-root level in the churches. But in spite of all the work of the missionaries, this demon has still not been exorcized from the churches. It is true that ‘caste dharma’ was weakened, but caste system still continues. The creation of new Protestant community drawn from several under-privileged castes, was a new social factor which came to be designated as the SIUC community, just like the Syrian Christian community.
In the South Travancore Mission of the LMS, the South Travancore Church Union was formed in the year 1904, with its objective to “Co-ordinate the various pastorates of the mission, each of which was till then practically independent of the mission and of the another”. The control of the church passed from the missionaries to a body largely controlled by the laity. Thus they became administrators of their own church.

The protestant missionaries, belonged to various denominations met at Madras in 1900 and discussed about various issues related to their missions. In 1901 the United Free Church of Scotland and American Arcot Mission joined together and formed ‘Presbyterian Union’. In 1905, the LMS in South India and American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions joined together and formed ‘Congregational Union’. In the meantime, South Travancore Church Council was formed in 1904. Later on in 1908, the above said Presbyterian churches and Congregational churches joined together and formed South India United Church (SIUC). The SIUC comprised of eight church councils – Jaffna, Kanada, Madras, Madurai, Malabar, North Tamil, Telugu and South Travancore. Among them, South Travancore Mission was the most important one and numerically it
stood first. The SIUC was a self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating Indian church.

In 1947, the SIUC, the Methodists and the Anglican Churches in South India united together and Church of South India (CSI) was formed. In short, Travancore state was awakened to a new life and new possibilities. Through their efforts, the Christians secured the required freedom to lead a dignified life. But one outstanding truth remains: Christians freed from the traditions of Hinduism were more interested in social and economical progress than in acquiring a deeper understanding of the Christian faith.