Acknowledgement
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This thesis entitled “Churches and their Services in Nagercoil” is the outcome of my research as a part-time scholar in the Research Centre of History of the Nesamony Memorial Christian College, Martandam during 1999-2004 for the degree of Ph.D. The knowledge of research that I gained through my M.Phil studies under ICC and CE of the Department of History of the Madurai Kamaraj University inspired me to undertake this venture. The object of the work is to highlight the contribution of the Churches in Nagercoil for the many sided development of the town.

Already many research works have been brought out highlighting the political and social history of Travancore as well as the contributions of various Churches towards the development of the region. In those works Nagercoil is mentioned only casually. In short no organised attempt has been made so far to throw light on the role of the various Churches in the emergence of Nagercoil from obscurity into eminence. What I learnt further in the course of my research is the fact that the
developments extended over a period of about one and a half century, that is up to 1947.

The four Churches – Catholic, London Missionary Society, Salvation Army and Indian Evangelical Lutheran Church of Travancore had their beginning in the Nagercoil centre. When the Catholic Church had eastward expansion from the Nagercoil centre, the other three Churches had a westward expansion. However, all the four Churches strengthened their position in the Nagercoil centre through their main and auxiliary services.

Within a short span of time Nagercoil rose to prominence with steepled Churches and a network of educational and medical institutions for the benefit of entire sections of the society. The many acts of service rendered by these Churches for the development of Nagercoil shall remain unique.

In the course of this research attempt I have collected source materials from State and private agencies. Materials in the form of mission official papers, reports, public and private correspondence, personal letters, personal interviews and Government records constitute the primary sources. These contain a wide range of adequate information to highlight the theme of the study. Yet records with no details like place and date have also been used. Certain materials could not be used as they were badly damaged due to poor methods of preservation.
Major materials meant for this study have been collected from a variety of original records preserved in The Kerala State Archives, Kerala State Public Library and Kerala University Library at Trivandrum and the United Theological College Archives, Bangalore. Materials collected from Lutheran Heritage Archives, Chennai, Concordia Seminary Archives and Library, Kottar Diocese Archives, Post-Graduate and Research Centre, Department of Economics, Scott Christian College, C.S.I Pastor’s Library, Diocesan Library at Nagercoil and the Catherine Booth Hospital Administrative Office, Patheri too were a valuable source.

Similarly, I could also peruse the valuable records kept in the Gurukal Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, Chennai, the Libraries of St. Xavier’s College, and the South-Eastern India Territorial Headquarters Office of the Salvation Army at Palayamkottai, its Rural Development and vocational Training Centre Office, Chemparuthivilai, Nesamony Memorial Christian College Library, Marthandam, Scott Christian college Library, Kottar Diocesan Library, Concordia Theological Seminary Library and Salvation Army Training College at Nagercoil provided me with some reference materials and published works.

Personal interviews have helped fill certain gaps caused by the inaccuracy of diverse events and the non-availability of other source materials. As a matter of fact, many natives who worked in these Churches
in various capacities are still alive. Interviews with such men of rich experience have helped provide links to various events of the time.

Erection of a historical edifice on this theme appeared hard and complicated in the ordinary sense. Hence care has been taken in the narrative part to avoid deviations from the central theme. In content it establishes the services rendered by the Churches in a specific area and highlights their impact on the society. In doing so evangelisation being their main mission was never discarded.

The most magnificent aspect of their service was that it was directed at all without prejudice of caste and religion. Still, the native Churches could not get rid of their caste distinctions easily. When the Mission field of London Missionary Society was mainly inhabited by the Nadars, that of the Salvation Army and the Lutheran Church were monopolised by the most repressed sections like the Sambavars. But the case of the Catholic Church at Nagercoil was different. It had equal number of fishermen and Nadars in the congregation. However, all caste rivalries not withstanding, the fruits of the various Missions' endeavour reached even the meanest among the oppressed classes. In the course of this uplift and emancipation of the low caste Nagercoil itself rose to prominence as the scene of action of many a Mission.

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