CHAPTER III

The Effect of Christian Proselytization and
and Philanthropic Activities on the Contemporary
Socio-Cultural Milieu of Assam

The American Baptist Missionary Union sent Rev. Brown and Rev. Oliver T. Cutter to Sadiya. They arrived with their wives on March 23, 1836. The first activity they undertook upon arrival was to set up schools for both boys and girls with the help of Mrs. Cutter. Thus the start was made with a philanthropic activity rather than with proselytization, although the first was done as a preparatory step for the second. The schools with their new objectives and methods set the model for a new life-style for the local population.

Whether the Missionaries were aware of it or not, the adoption of new changes in daily activities constituted a fundamental challenge to the traditional cultures of the indigenous people. However, as the evangelists could make the indigenous people aware of the new modern world with the illuminating light of education, science, sanitation, medicine and even culture with which we are dealing in detail presently, the local people seem to have adjusted themselves with the new standards.

The principal means by which the American Baptist Missionaries contributed to the process of adjustment can be listed as follows:

The Christian gospel and new code of conduct
Humanitarian service
Language and Literature
The Christian gospel and the new code of conduct

The Missionaries in the nineteenth century who worked among the local population emphasized Christianity as a part of daily routine of life. To them, doctrine was important, but it was meaningless if not associated with conduct in conformity with the doctrine. They considered it so important that they expected a convert to value and practise a moral code of conduct presented by Christianity. On the other hand the new converts, mainly in the hill areas, could not abandon their previous social and religious beliefs.

The people of the Brahmaputra valley were even more serious in this respect. They were spiritually content with their religion. People do not change their religion as long as they are deeply satisfied with it. This was the case with Assamese Hindu people of the Brahmaputra valley. The teachings of neo-Vaishnavism by Sankaradeva and Madhabadeva was fulfilling to the Assamese Hindu society. They were so strong in their religious belief that the Missionaries were unable to attract them into Christianity. The situation with the immigrant tea garden labourers and the hills people was somewhat different. They did not have a strong determination in their religious belief like the followers of Vaishnava religion had. Those who converted to Christianity in the Brahmaputra valley were poor people and were of a lower class. Some of them accepted Christianity expecting to gain education to become employed with the Missionary or by the British administration.

Drinking of rice beer was closely associated with the traditional religious festivals and life-style of the hills people. The American Baptist Missionaries were not
in a rush to baptize anybody who wanted to become a Christian. They tried to look into the transformed 'true' Christian character of the person. The Baptist Missionaries believed that it was possible to change the religious aspects of indigenous people by changing the traditional 'immoral' values, without destroying the original culture. The Missionaries tried their best to eradicate the habit of drinking rice beer, particularly among the hills tribal community. The Baptist Missionaries were partly successful. Abstinence from the use of traditional rice beer changed the earlier lifestyle to a new lifestyle of the hills tribal people.

**Humanitarian service:**

**Campaign against opium eating habit:**

The use of opium was an even more serious problem than that of drinking rice beer. The use of opium was regarded as a great offense, and disciplinary action was taken against the converted native Christians by the Missionaries.

The American Baptist Missionaries took bold steps to eradicate the opium habit. They educated people to follow strict Christian principles even though they had to close quite a few Churches in hill areas. The American Baptist Missionaries strongly opposed the British Government because of its regulation in promoting the use of opium. The worst social evil was also understood by the educated Assamese people. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, a great Assamese social reformer, worked closely with the American Baptist Missionaries in this matter. He strongly criticized the Government, who encouraged the eating of opium for its economic gain. He described its effects by the middle of nineteenth century thus:
The universal use of opium has converted the Assamese, once a hardy, industrious and enterprising race, into an effeminate (Sic), weak, indolent, and a degraded people. It has been universally the sole cause of undermining the health and physical constitution of the whole population. It is used by the young as well as the old. Women themselves are often not excepted; and in many parts of the country, opium is freely administered to infants and children. It is therefore high time for the Government to provide speedy and effectual remedies to preserve the country from utter ruin and degradation (Mills 1984:110).

The American Baptist Missionaries joined with Assamese social reformers for the eradication of the habit of drinking alcohol and using opium by native people (Barpujari 1987:9).

The Missionaries attempted to eradicate the habit of opium eating in two ways. Firstly they tried to take disciplinary action against the converts. Secondly, they persuaded the government to declare its' use illegal. The Missionary Conference of 1893 adopted the following resolution:

Whereas, it is an admitted fact that opium is used to excess in the province of Assam, and

Whereas, we believe that the use of this drug and that of spirituous liquors is greatly detrimental to all the best interests of the people, therefore:

Resolved: That we, as a Conference of Christian missionaries laboring in the province, do hereby express our abhorrence of these evils, and deplore the fact that a Christian Government sustains its present relation to them. And further that we most earnestly desire the success of those commonly called the Anti-opium party, and those who are striving to promote the cause of temperance in India (Downs 1995:34-35).

The British government prohibited the cultivation of opium, and only permitted the use of imported opium while continuing to collect a decent amount of tax money, securing a monopoly on the opium trade. By doing so, rather than improving the
problem of opium, addiction was getting worse. The American Baptist Missionaries passed a stronger resolution at the Missionary Conference of 1904 - 5.

Be it resolved that we rejoice to learn of the efforts being made to lessen the use of intoxicating liquors in the Province of Assam, and would be glad to see the entire abolition of the traffic. Furthermore; whereas the sale of opium is making great havoc by the degrading influence of the drug on the native peoples on many of our mission fields [ in the province ], thus hindering and counteracting the civilizing and ennobling effects of the Christian religion upon these people; and Whereas the baneful and degrading effects of this habit seems to us to be on the increase, and we know it to be in some sections among these peoples; and whereas the sale of opium is under the direct supervision and control of the British Government; and Whereas the British Government is founded upon and owes its greatness to the blessings of Christianity which are by this traffic in opium being greatly and seriously retarded in their progress in the Province of Assam; Therefore be it Resolved:

(1) That we, Christian Missionaries of the American Baptist Missionary Union, in Conference assembled, do deeply deplore the degradation and ruin wrought by this traffic upon the native peoples of this Province.
(2) That we do respectfully request and earnestly implore the British Government, through its representative, The Hon. J. B. Fuller, ICS, The Chief Commissioner of Assam, to do all in its power to abolish the sale of the drug, except it be for medicinal purposes, in the province (Downs 1995 : 34 - 37).

Gradually the use of opium became less of a problem within the Church and within the area of Assam in general. It is difficult to say who should get the credit for the eradication of the problem. But the Christian community, mainly the American Baptist Missionaries, played a significant role in ending its use within the Christian community (Downs, 1992:149).

Eradication of slavery:

Another social evil during the early years of the British administration was the problem of slavery in Assam. This evil predominantly existed among Singphos, Nagas
and Mizos. Rev. Nathan Brown, who was from the northern part of America, was a full supporter of the anti-slavery movement in America. Mrs. A.K. Gurney writes about Rev. Nathan Brown:

In politics he was a pronounced anti-slavery man, and was one of the three delegates who waited on President Lincoln before the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation (Gurney 1887:250).

The Baptist Missionaries repeatedly petitioned the government to end the slavery practice within the territories under its administration - an effort that eventually led to its prohibition despite the apparent reluctance of the government to do so (Downs, 1992:151).

The British Commissioner of Assam Mr. David Scott was also not in favour of slavery in Assam. The British government studied the matter but did not take any action for complete abolition, considering the administrative strategy and the poor condition of slaves. Mr. Barooah states:

Where he felt he could Scott acted against slavery. Thus immediately after the liberation of Lower Assam he liberated some twelve thousand slaves and ordered Neufville to rescue and free the Assamese enslaved by the Singphos (Barooah 1970:173).

Improvement of health:

The Christian Missionaries placed emphasis on personal cleanliness and hygienic living conditions. They persuaded the hills people to bathe regularly, although the water to be carried from distant streams or springs. The Missionaries developed the water supply system, and even introduced technical innovations such as water pipes. The Welsh Missionaries in the Khasi-Jaintia region encouraged Christians to establish model villages where better standards of hygiene could be maintained. The
model village scheme developed by D.E. Jones near Aijawl, was an example of a modern life-style. The regulations adopted for residence were very valuable from the point of improved living conditions, and are as follows:

1. All houses must be at a distance of at least ten feet from one another [to help prevent fire - the traditional practice of building houses close together resulted in whole villages being consumed when a fire started in one house].

2. Animals are to be kept in a separate building [traditionally domestic animals had stayed either under or inside the houses - a practice considered unhealthy].

3. The beams of the house must be at least six feet above the floor [to provide better ventilation].

4. Each house must have a separate latrine.

5. Drinking water must be boiled.

6. The inhabitants must go regularly to a place of worship (Downs 1983:208).

This matter was given importance by the Missionaries, and living conditions were a matter of discussions in the Church meetings. So the Churches were not only a place of worship, but played an important role in uplifting the living conditions of the people. In the plains of Assam, touring sisters of various congregations also took part in the grihini schools (Downs 1992:155).

The Missionaries also paid attention to the personal appearance of the Christian people. The Missionaries encouraged the converts, both men and women, particularly in hill areas, to cover their bodies to a larger extent than was traditionally
done. In fact, the Baptist Missionaries did not seek to introduce the western style of dress. They recommended that ladies adapt the indigenous form of dress, rather than western dresses. Later Christians used western dresses because of their attraction to the western styles, however most women continued to dress in their local way. Gradually people in the hills cut their hair to look neat, which was due to the general impact of modernization.

**Teachings against social evils:**

The American Baptist Missionaries tried to reform the practice of child marriage and polygamy. At the same time they advocated for the marriage of widow. The influence of the American Baptist Missionaries was reflected by Assamese reformers Hemchandra Barua and Guanbhiram Barua, on the matters of child marriage, widow marriage and polygamy (Barpujari 1987:9).

The Missionaries tried to solve the problem of warfare between the neighbouring villages of hill areas. They also attempted to abolish objectionable tribal practices like head-hunting.

In her book 'Sowing Seeds in Assam', Ms. Ella Marie Holmes describes a corrupt practice of social evil. Holmes states in her book thus:

I adopted three little brown girls. ---- Prova and Lecy were sisters, five and seven. Their mother was Christian. Their father ate hemp, which in effects similar to opium. The mother died and father was negotiating to sell these two little girls, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, to a Mahammedan for ten rupees. The Mahammedan would have kept the girls as house servants until they were about thirteen years of age when he would have sold them to some fellow Mahammedan for wives, receiving forty or even sixty rupees apiece for them. Prova is now married to a Christian and has two children. Leci is
completing her training as nurse and ready to serve in our first women's hospital to be opened in Gauhati this winter.

Women's rights movement:

Women in the plains or hills were not properly honoured in the early days of Assam. The Baptist Missionaries focused and educated people under Christian influence for the equal rights of women. Through Christianity, the relationship between men and women was improved in Christian homes. At first, it was considered a waste to send girls to school. Gradually this attitude changed for the Christian people, and eventually to all sections of society.

By the end of the 19th century, the Women's rights movement had already started in the west. The same movement was brought to the mission field by men and women. But women's activities in this respect were more challenging. The American Baptist Missionaries established a separate society - the Women's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. The women's society was mainly involved in educational and woman's work at first, and later in medical fields. The Women's society contributed in many areas, but its most important contribution was with regard to the changing status of women in the field of education. The American Baptists were the first to provide education for women in North-East India, with schools for girls being established at Sadiya and in other mission centres. The Nowgong Orphan Institution was the first co-educational institution in Assam. These schools were the basis for all changes that were to take place in the status of women - in all communities of the region, among Christians as well as people of other faiths (Downs 1992: 163).
Work in medical field:

Among all their humanitarian services, the most extensive activity of the American Baptist Missionaries was in the medical field. During the early period after the arrival of the American Baptist Missionaries in Assam, there was no knowledge of modern medicine or surgery. Both the hills and plains people believed that disease was related to evil spirits, and the remedy was to please the evil spirit by following religious rituals.

When the American Baptist Missionaries first arrived in Assam, disease was widespread. Cholera, malaria and Kala Azar (Black Fever) were major causes of illness and death. The death of Missionaries in early days was common. The early Missionaries picked up an elementary knowledge of first aid and medicine, and treated the simplest diseases with their very preliminary knowledge. Some of the Missionaries took some kind of medical training on their own initiative when they visited America in their home trips. The Missionaries had to play the role of healer of the body and soul in remote hill areas. Many of the Missionaries offered medical help to the surrounding sick people rather than trying to lead their attention towards Christian preaching. On the other hand, the patients went to see them for relief of pain, without any concern about Christianity. Love and concern was expressed by the Missionaries and was understood by the patients with gratitude. However, this paved a way for an easy conversion for the Missionaries.

In the annual report, July 1892 Mr. Rivenburg reports from Kohima:

I am convinced that in no other way could I have gotten so near the heart and confidence of the people as by helping them this point where they are so utterly helpless.
The American Baptist Missionaries was not the first who worked in the medical field in Assam. After first world war, the American Baptist Missionaries developed a strong interest in the medical mission, although they were opposed by the Home Board. Most works of the American Baptist Missionaries in the medical field were performed in early part of the twentieth century. Dr. Crozier was the first American Baptist designated as medical missionary to Tura for the Assam Mission. The second Baptist medical missionary was Dr. Kirby who came to Sadiya in 1901. In 1919 he was transferred to Jorhat, where he opened a small dispensary near the Jorhat Missionary School compound. Dr. Kirby on his own initiative moved the small dispensary to Borbheta in 1924. In 1933 a twenty five bed hospital was built. A nursing school was also opened in 1934 and in 1941, under the leadership of Dr. O.W. Hasselblad, the hospital was expanded and more facilities were added.

In response to the request of Women's Council of the Assam Baptist Convention, a women's hospital was opened in Guwahati in 1920, commonly known as Chatribari Hospital. This was the first hospital established by the Baptist Missionaries in the plains area of Assam. The location of Guwahati was selected because purdah was more strictly observed in lower Assam in those days. The women did not prefer to see a male doctor in those days.

After the second world war, missionary hospitals were expanded by increasing the capacity to accommodate more patients. The Missionaries received calls from the nearby villagers asking the Missionaries to prescribe medicine for them. In response to this, the Missionaries opened some health units in the villages, prescribed medicine and
helped with the vaccination for smallpox. Even the native Christian Godhula took part in giving the vaccination to the people.

Other missionaries of different origins also opened hospitals in different parts of Assam. Even against the reluctance of the Home Board in America, the Baptist Missionaries served the people with strong determination. The Home Board was not in favour of establishing the hospitals because of limited funds. But the Baptist Missionaries were able to see the light at the end of the tunnel. They understood that this was one of the most important and effective means in gaining the attention, sympathy and good will of the people.

When the government started the charitable dispensary in Nagaon in 1863, Miles Bronson offered his help and fully cooperated with the project. He was very much on the alert so that all the poor people could get the benefit from the dispensary (Bhuyan 1990: 34-35).

**Education:**

Providing education to the people was the most important plan of the American Baptist Missionaries. Education was the bridge between the people and the new British administration. Establishment of schools by the American Baptist Missionaries for the propagation of Christianity, was a foremost action for the early Missionaries. Adoniram Judson, the early Baptist missionary, started schools in Burma. When the American Baptist Missionaries arrived at Sadiya they also instituted the opening of schools. The Baptist Missionaries wanted to educate the people to understand the truth in Christianity. The Missionaries realized that educating people
would make it easier for them to have a gradual conversion into Christianity.

The first school was opened at Sadiya by Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Cutter, just after their arrival. When the Missionaries moved to Jaipur from Sadiya, another school was opened. In later days the Missionaries opened new centres at Sibsagar, Nagaon and Guwahati.

Arriving at Nagaon, Rev. Bronson purchased land which had a small bungalow for the mission compound. Bronson had a master plan for the school at Nagaon. He looked for a permanent source for the future teachers for the schools and leaders to organize future Christian Churches.

The Nowgong Orphan Institution:

The Nowgong Orphan Institution, founded by Rev. Miles Bronson in 1843, was the first co-educational school in the plains of Assam. This institution was the source of converts in the plains areas of Assam. Later, similar schools were established in Guwahati and Sibsagar. In the Baptist Missionary annual report, May 1847, the objective of his 'Nowgong Orphan Institute' was reported as follows:

The object of the institution is to gather orphan and destitute children from every part of Assam, and train them up under a careful Christian influence; all who manifest a good degree of ability, to receive an education that will qualify them to become competent teachers and catechists, and those who manifest less ability, to be taught in connection with an elementary and Christian education, such trades and employments as will enable them to earn their own bread, and become useful members of society.

The annual report of the American Baptist Missionary, May 1850 and May 1852, confirms that the Orphan School at Nagaon included children of all the Hindu
castes, from the Brahmin down to the lower grades, together with Kachari and Mussulman children, and that the studies were conducted in Assamese, Bengali and English. Manual exercise was required daily for men, and the women were taught plain sewing, weaving, spinning and native house keeping.

By 1850 the school curriculum was revised to eight year duration, and the record shows the first six years as follows:

First and second year curriculum included writing, reading, spelling, math and geography in Assamese. The third year included Bengali and English, in addition to lessons from New Testament and the Orunodoi. Fourth and fifth years were devoted to histories of Assam, Bengal and India, including grammar and translation. In the sixth year courses English, history, philosophy and composition were taught (Radtke 1995: 2-3).

The first conversion in Nowgong Church took place in 1844, but until end of 1846, no one was baptized from ‘Nowgong Orphan Institute’.

Rev. Bronson’s ideas for the Orphan Institute may be summarized as follows:

1. The rescue of promising children.
2. Removal of the influence of caste by putting the children under the influence of the Christian religion.
3. Continuity of the education of the students, as parents or relatives would not remove them from schools.
4. Increased student attendance.
5. Prevailing superstitions would not influence the students.
6. Students would earn full belief and embrace Christianity.
7. School would have a religious dimension, and books will be chiefly religious along with secular subjects.

Rev. Bronson expected to form a community, and hoped that the students would become magnets for others to join Christianity. He wanted to connect teaching and preaching. Bronson's idea for the Orphan Institution gradually gained acceptance. He also proposed to hold a fund under government security, so that the financial problem in running the school could be avoided. The British, American and even native donors came forward to support for his cause.

The 'Nowgong Orphan Institute' was running in full vigour until the arrival of Rev. Solomon Peck from America in December 1853. Due to a financial crisis, the American Baptist Mission Union in America was planning to review their activities abroad. In the meantime, just before leaving to America, Bronson made an appeal for financial help for construction of an Orphan Institute building and a chapel at Nagaon. This was not appreciated by the Executive Committee. Upon the recommendation of Rev. Solomon Peck, some major changes took place. As a result, the Orphan Institute was directed to convert into a school with primary and normal departments, with main emphasis on training native teachers. Other conditions attached to this were: no student was to stay longer than three years in either department, the girls' department was to be separated from the institution and would have its own boarding school, the enrollment was limited to forty, no one under ten years would be allowed for admission, the instruction would be solely given in the vernacular medium.
Accordingly the changes were adopted. Gradually the number of students decreased, and finally by July 1856 the ‘Nowgong Orphan Institute’ was closed. The Bronsons continued to struggle through October 1857, when they furloughed and one native assistant took charge of the dwindling Nowgong Church.

**Other educational institution**:

Although the majority of the Christians were from hill tribal groups, some of its major institutions were located in the Brahmaputra valley. These included two large hospitals and nursing schools at Jorhat and Guwahati, a girls’ high school at Golaghat, a theological college at Jorhat and its ecclesiastical headquarters at Guwahati.

The American Baptist Missionaries put a continued effort into the development of schools. In the early part of the twentieth century, they formulated a master plan under one management as Jorhat Christian School. The plan was to have four schools: a middle school, a high school, an industrial school and a Bible school. Later, a training institute was also added.

In the 1930's, the British successfully introduced commercial tea plantations in Assam. This opened an important new field in which the Baptist Missionaries could distribute the Gospel. Initially the Chinese tea makers and box makers were brought from China, which proved very expensive. The British trained local artisans for these purposes and resolved the problem in an inexpensive way. But the demand for unskilled labourers could not be resolved with the local available labour force. The British decided to bring tea garden labourers from outside of Assam. The largest labour force immigrated to Assam from the Chota Nagpur region of Bihar. Some of
these labourers were already converted Christians, and some were familiar with Christianity. The American Baptist Missionaries took the opportunity for evangelism and to distribute the Gospel. Some of the British managers helped the Baptist Missionaries in reaching their goals. The Missionaries opened schools, and started teaching and preaching among the Kols and other tea garden labourers.

It was the Missionaries who wanted to give an industrial education and training to the sons of the soil, which was a step towards achieving modern technology. However, the plan did not work out as expected due to lack of students. Finally after the first world war, it became a financial burden due to heavy stocking of materials in the industrial school. At the request of the American Baptist Missionaries, the government took over the management of the industrial school. It is still running under Government management as Industrial Training Institute at Jorhat (Downs 1971:106).

Education was started by the Missionaries for promoting evangelistic work. The purpose of education to native people was to read their own language and to create teachers and preachers for the propagation of Christianity. Nineteenth century missionary education served two basic functions. The first was to break down the barriers of superstition. The second was to provide a means of Christian instruction and access to the Christian scriptures, as well as other forms of Christian literature (Downs 1983:266-268).
Language and Literature:

The contribution of the American Baptist Missionaries in developing the Assamese literature is so valuable, that a discussion will be incomplete without mentioning the name of the American Baptist Missionaries as pathfinders and leaders. Until the Missionaries' arrival, Assamese literature was more or less confined to an oral state. Although the books (*puthis*) written by Sankaradeva and Madhabadeva and the *Buronjis* written at the time of Ahom Kings were prevalent in the past, the common people were not exposed to literature.

The American Baptist Missionaries brought the Assamese language to a more modern style. They provided the Assamese a modern form of literature both through their own compositions, and by the writings of Assamese literates, which were published from the Baptist Mission Press located at Sibsagar. This resulted in a great literary renaissance for the Assamese people. The Missionaries produced grammar, dictionary, text books for schools, religious Christian books translated to Assamese and even novels. Reproduction of *Buronjis* was an significant contribution to the Assamese literature. But their main literary vehicle was the periodical *Orunodoi*, first published in January 1846 and continued until 1880. The *Orunodoi* was the first periodical published in Assamese language.

Rev. George Gillespie has described the contents of the *Orunodoi* in his article Orunodoi which was published in the *Journal of the University of Gauhati* and reproduced in the Indian Church History Review, X11, No.1, 1978 as follows (Gillespie 1978:20):
The paper covered local and foreign news, descriptions of the tribal people of Assam as well as of foreign countries, science, machines, animals of the World, the stars, coins, European and Hindu mythology, old Assamese manuscripts, book reviews, Christian teaching, and some news of the Assamese Christian community. It frequently had poetry, both original and translated. It called for many reforms, such as widow remarriage. For the Assamese people it was the only source of news from outside Assam.

The contribution made by Nathan Brown in developing the new literature, as well as in preserving the ancient manuscript is noteworthy. In establishing Assamese as the mother tongue in the schools and courts of Assam, thereby replacing Bengali, the leadership taken by Dr. Nathan Brown and Dr. Miles Bronson will always be remembered by the people of Assam.

Dr. B.K. Barua describes the impact of the Missionaries in the Assamese language and literature thus:

The missionaries definitely achieved one thing. Up till now Assamese literature was more or less an oral literature confined to the villages and the Ahom court. Now it takes a definitely urban complexion, and at Gauhati, Sibsagar, Nowgong and such other headquarter towns, literary circles sprang up. The old religious tone was replaced by a more secular one, and there grew up a literature dealing not with a mythical world of Gods and nymphs but with the life and society of the 'mortal millions' here and now. Western ideas began to spread along with the progress of English education in the land. In every town a literary society was born. Old beliefs, ways and concepts yielded place to new ones. The influence of western ideas began to be keenly felt in the domain of literature, which now enters a period of varied creative activity (Barua 1964: 106-107).

The Christian proselytization changed the lives of the tribal people of the hills. Christianity brought the hills tribal societies in contact with modern civilization. It helped in the eradication of the old objectionable customs, which had existed in some parts of the hills such as head hunting. Christianity also played a major role in the
process of integrating the hills people in the north east with the rest of the India. Christianity, along with the British administration, gave birth to a process of modernization which included cash economy and previously unknown commodities, road and rail communications, modern education and medicine, newspapers and books, models of new life-styles and a new judicial and political system (Downs 1983:3).

Christianity, along with education, helped the indigenous people to see the new world. In those early days, Dhaniram and Sibaram, two Assamese students from Nowgong Mission School, made a voyage to Boston, America. They were the first Assamese to visit America. They traveled with the American Missionaries and were excited to see so many things for the first time in their life. They wrote letters to Assam expressing their feelings on being in a developed country. In the future they hoped to see Assam become as prosperous a country as America (Neog 1983:365).

As a result of the education and technical training made by the Missionaries and British administration, a group of professional people emerged with a new innovational outlook. To some extent, the habits of people were changed by the influence of western culture. We notice a change in style of dress by men and women. Most indigenous people did not have an outlook for business. The concept of trade and commerce came to their mind after seeing the activities of the western business people.

An important joint contribution of the British administration and the Missionaries was the intellectual revolution of the Assamese literate. It gave birth to a
social and intellectual life. It was a renaissance to modern Assamese literature. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, a great reformer of Assam, clearly understood the stagnant sphere of Assamese society. He encouraged the Assamese people to gain morals. His book *Asomia Lorar Mitra* was of immense value to the Assamese society. In the same spirit, he was followed by Hemchandra Barua and Gunabhiram Barua. Both Baruas realized that social reformation was absolutely necessary for progress of the Assamese society. They exposed the social evils of Assamese society without any hesitation. Hemchandra Barua depicted the degraded picture of Assamese in his satirical writing *Kania-Kirtan* (1861) and *Bahire Rong-Chong Bhitore Kowabhaturi*. Gunabhiram also in his drama *Ram-Navami* (1857) highlighted the conservative society (Sarma S. N. 1981 : 294-296).

In different areas of old Assam, the names of the Missionaries are engraved in the heart of the people for their services to the society. Such is the case with Dr. Nathan Brown and Dr. Miles Bronson in Assam. It is they who laid the foundation of Assamese literature in the modern age.

How Assamese literature was rehabilitated in Assam with the help of the American Baptist Missionaries are discussed in more detail in chapter IV.
Chapter III

Notes & References

1. The conception of "immoral" values to the Baptist Missionaries as well as the British administrator is questionable. From their point of considerations both the British and the Baptist Missionaries considered some of the traditional cultures of hills tribal people as "immoral". But evidences support that if the practices are within Christian culture, the "immoral" becomes "moral".