CONCLUSION

The advent of the Protestant Missionaries in Tirunelveli District was a great landmark in the socio-economic, religious and educational history of the district. The Missionaries applied full-heartedly to the educational and social advancement without neglecting their Missionary duties. They sincerely believed that education was the gateway to the dissemination of Christian doctrines. Education and evangelization were sincerely linked in their minds.

It was for eradicating illiteracy among the Christian children. So that they could initiate propagating Christian values for building the church. Nevertheless children irrespective of caste and religion received the blessings of education in the Mission schools. The Protestant Missionaries broke the monopoly of education enjoyed by a few castes only over centuries. By opening the Mission Schools to all, they universalized education among the masses. Similarly they championed the course of education to women by opening schools and colleges only for girls. It can be said that they were the pioneers in destroying the age-old saying that girls should not be educated. This policy produced its echo throughout the country. Thus the Missionaries efforts produced far-reading consequences throughout India.

The job-oriented crafts taught in industrial sections and schools helped the destitute and the school drop-outs to lead a respectful life. Illiterate women learned
to be self-employed. The age-old practice of attributing a crafts to a particular caste slowly came to an end. The problem of unemployment was solved to a great extent. Industrial education strengthened the idea of life with dignity. No labour was considered mean at all.

Adult education programmes conducted by the Protestant Missionaries in Tirunelveli were a pioneering effort in India. To bring the adults, particularly uneducated women, to school at night and educate them could well be claimed as an achievement. The different methods used by the Missionaries at night schools had become models to the present day organizers of the present social education programmes. However, the Missionaries could not wipe away completely literacy. Still their endeavor was commendable in every respect.

The Teacher Training School which is the oldest in India was opened by the Missionaries in Tirunelveli. The first Secondary Grade Teacher Training School for women in the presidency was opened in Tirunelveli. The Missionaries admitted men from backward castes and broke the monopoly of teaching a few. For the first time women became teachers. Even the Government of India followed the Missionary methods practiced in teacher education. The youth trained in the Mission schools were employed in many parts of India and abroad. The first Teacher Training School for women had to be closed. But the other schools started afterwards continue to serve the community even today.
The Protestant Missionaries composed books not only for the students but also for the masses. Tamil prose was neglected, but the Missionaries encouraged the efforts in writing books in Tamil. Many books in English were translated in Tamil and vice versa. For the first time the text books on different subjects were printed in Tamil. The Missionaries wrote books in social, religious, cultural and political history of the Tamils. Many biographies and auto-biographies were published by them. The Missionaries were mainly responsible for demonstrating the scientific method in historical writing. The auxiliaries like bending library, the printing press, book depots and the like hastened of the growth of Tamil literature. Narpothagam the oldest of the Tamil periodicals, continues to be published in Tirunelveli of the seven Tamil periodicals, which have celebrated their centenary the first and the seventh were started by the Missionaries in Tirunelveli. In the field of comparative grammar, anthology, historical and scientific investigation of Tamil words, the Missionaries no doubt were the pioneers.

The system of education followed by the Missionaries had some defects although it had some points to praise. Their main aim was winning soul to Christ. By introducing western education, they believed that this aim could be achieved. Though there was much to praise, it had some defects also. As their major aim was winning souls to Christ, they believed that by introducing western education, they could achieve their aim. The westernized education, with English as the basic material, worked against the indigenous system of education. As the Missionaries
were foreigners they could not properly measure what the Indian children needed. The children were expected to learn more than two languages, and in some schools four languages, along with other subjects. They made the syllabus unrealistically very heavy. As the Missionaries were strict disciplinarians their methods were highly authoritative. Both the teacher and the taught found adjustments with a few of them very difficult.

The Missionaries transmitted through the schools the Anglican rights and rituals to the students. Their own traditions and practices were held by them as supreme. The Bible was compulsorily taught. All the students irrespective of religion were expected to participate in the religious activities of the school. Conversion was not only practiced but also encouraged.

Many students were attracted by the English customs and manners, losing their native identity in the process. The Minutes of Macaulay (1815) had come true. The rich cultural heritage of the Tamils came to be neglected, through, though the Missionaries who came later served the cause of Tamil language and literature. The Missionaries attacked Hinduism, its culture and literature tooth and nail. They gave scholarships to Christian students only. Many of the Missionaries were against providing higher education to the Hindus.

However, when observed scientifically that they merits outnumbered by defects of Missionary services. Though their religion notified of conversion was
pursued to the end, it did not eclipse the nobler values and objectives of bringing the education to all, bringing the caste system, abolishing narrow social beliefs and practices, and working for the upliftment of women in general and the handicapped in particular, bringing about a healthy transformation of the backward and the down-trodden into respectable and useful members of the society. They instilled into the minds of the young noble virtues and qualities, thus giving morality a place of supremacy in the scheme of education. They proved beyond doubt that education was not mere learning, but a process of character buildings, a process by which ordinary students were made good citizens. Though there was insistence on the study of the Bible, they succeeded in restoring to religion its place of importance. They preached what they believed. However, their deep faith in Christian values, and Christian way of life did not make them religious fanatics. They encouraged conversion as they believed that it was the only way to save the erring souls.

Their motives apart, the Missionaries exemplified in their lives the great virtues of love and sacrifice. Though their total involvement with the ignorant, superstition–ridden and illiterate masses. The services rendered by the Missionaries on the whole cannot be adequately measured, except in terms of love and gratitude of the people of Tirunelveli District.