CHAPTER FIVE
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Evangelistic Work

Evangelism means good news or a doctrine set up as a saving principle especially in morals.¹ Through the Evangelistic Work the message of the Christian faith is being carried to those not already within the community of the Christian Church. Evangelization is the act of proclaiming the Gospel for Christianization or the attempt to persuade others to the rightness of the Gospel or the act of spreading the Christian Gospel with the aim of conversion. Evangelist means a person who was authorized by the Church to preach the Gospel but who is without responsibility for a fixed area. The evangelistic work is an important and integral part of the function of a diocese. The diocese of Tinnevelly also concentrates more on evangelistic work and follows the methods of Early Christian Missionaries of Tinnevelly in its evangelistic work with dedication and innovation. The missionaries of the 19th century took keen interest in the evangelistic work to establish the Church in Tinnevelly region. They adopted a few innovative methods such as “Kristhava Samaya Prachara Yathreehar” or the “Christian religious itinerant preacher”.

Rev.Rhenius introduced this system in 1838. Accordingly, every pastorate appointed two members to visit every village in Tinnevelly region for preaching the Gospel. The Church called these preachers as Yathreehar.² The two ardent missionaries, Rev.Rhenius and Rev.Schmid, full

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of faith, entered upon a most energetic crusade against the powers of evil. To the heathen, the Gospel was preached, not only in the large towns of Tinnevelly and Palayamkottai, but in the surrounding villages and schools were established. When Rev.Rhenius was transferred from Madras to Tinnevelly, he was requested by the missionaries of Tanjore to undertake the superintendence of SPG which was without a shepherd, in connection with his work for his own society. The new mission soon outstripped the old and at the close of his connection with the CMS, after sixteen years of labour, the number of those gathered out from the heathen and enrolled under his pastoral care was above 10,000.3

Rev.Rhenius was thirty years old when he left for Tinnevelly and for the next fifteen years was the mainspring humanly speaking of the Tinnevelly Mission. By a mutually arranged division of Labour Schmid devoted himself mainly to education while Rev.Rhenius had general charge of the field and did evangelistic work. Rev.Rhenius was looking for a house for rent to settle in Tinnevelly. But he was not able to find it. But Rev.Hough came forwarded to sell his Bungalow, school and seminary to Rev.Rhenius.4 This property was first acquired by CMS in the district. Rev.Hough purchased it in 1818 and was residing there till his removal from the district when he made it over to the CMS.

Rev.Clark (SPG missionary, 1855-1866) successfully followed this system. A Church at Arugmaganeri sent Yathreehars to the nearby villages for Gospel work and became an example to other Churches. Rev.Ragland introduced another method in evangelistic work by introducing

4.Christadoss, *Rhenius the apostle of Tinnevelly*, the Bethal publications, 1976, Palayamkottai

222
an Evangelistic Band in 1854. He formed a group for the Band, which consisted of missionaries or priests, church workers and volunteers. This group visited a village and put a tent temporarily. Then they preached the Gospel at every surrounding village from this centre for three weeks. After completing the Gospel work, they put their tent in another village. Thus they systematically did Gospel work for six months. Then, they visited the first village again for the follow-up work. This new method offered a fruitful result in every place. Rev.Walker refreshed the evangelistic band of Rev.Ragland. The members of the band began their Gospel work from 6a.m. because most of the villagers left their homes early morning for field work. For collecting the people at one place, they sang Christian songs with musical accompaniment of violins, tambourines, cymbals and triangle.⁵

In some places, a wave of mass movement started from one village and touched all nearby villages. In 1859, mass movement started from Ukkiramankottai and spread to Parvathiapuram, Kallathikinaru, mailodai and Pantrikulam. In some places, the people themselves demolished their village temples and built their church on the same place. In some places, the people converted their temples into churches after removing all idols of the temples. In 1880, the C.M.S. started “Tinnevelly Missionary Association” to administer all the preachers in Gospel work. In 1887, it changed the name of the Association as “C.M.S. Itinerating Band”. In 1900, the S.P.G. mission also formed a Band in the name of “Tinnevelly S.P.G. Evangelistic Itinerating Band”. The S.P.G. Band halted in a centre for a number of days for preaching in all the surrounding villages within the radius of three miles.⁶ They conducted street preaching at

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⁶ Madras Diocesan Committee’s Report of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1904, pp-222-223
nights. The S.P.C.K. freely supplied magic lantern and slides for the Gospel work. The C.M.S. cultivated the missionary spirit through its ‘Missionary Intelligencer’, a vernacular monthly paper among the Christians. The C.M.S. trained some members of the Church, who were selected by the Special Board of the C.M.S. for giving training in Bible History, Hinduism and methods of Gospel Work. The trained evangelists stayed for 10 to 20 days in a particular place and did evangelistic work in towns, villages and markets.\footnote{7. The Church Missionary Review, Vol-I, VIII, The Church Missionary Society, London, September 1908, pp-554-559}

The S.P.G. and the C.M.S. introduced special Gospel weeks in 1907. In these particular weeks, the mission churches encouraged their church members to participate in the evangelistic work by conducting each one personally. Then, this became the compulsory duty of the congregations. The two missions formed Gospel Bands for them entirely for doing Gospel work. After their amalgamation, the Bands became a unit as “Tinnevelly Diocesan Itinerary Band”. It systematically visited every nook and corner of the Diocese for Gospel work every year. In its evangelistic campaign, the Band made several attempts to reach the old and the young, the learned and the illiterate, the townsmen and the villagers in all parts of the Diocese. After the formation of the independent Diocese of Tinnevelly, there was an impetus in the spread of Gospel. The native Christians of the Diocese felt that it was a burden on their shoulders for the spread of the Gospel. It led to the adoption of a few more innovative methods including the formation of the Indian Missionary Society (I.M.S.). This was the first indigenous missionary society to work among Indians. The I.M.S. started its Gospel work at Dornakal in 1904.
In the beginning, the Indians considered Christianity as a foreign religion and the religion of ruling race. Therefore, the evangelists often faced ignorance, superstition and opposition. The villagers considered them as political workers, vaccinators, tax collectors and wandering minstrels. In some villages, the evangelists were not allowed to preach because they believed that if anyone became a Christian, their village deity would become enraged and torment the whole village. In some villages, the people considered Christianity as a religion of the low caste people.

**Gospel Work**

The church is the centre that promotes evangelistic work. So it is comparatively easy to get the people to pay for the evangelistic effort. All evangelistic works were conducted under the leadership of the clergymen and the church workers. The clergymen of the church selected the church workers and then recommended to the Bishop to issue them licence. Temporary licence was issued to every worthy public servant. To improve the religious knowledge of the workers, ‘Bishop Gell Prize’ examinations were conducted. Only the licence holders were allowed to serve as church workers or catechists. Full-time paid catechists were appointed in every village with more than 300 Christians. To improve their quality, catechists’ training classes were conducted every year at Pasumalai in Madura. Generally, a local T.D.T.A. School teacher was appointed as church worker. The council chairman arranged a summer school for the teacher-catechists.

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8. Pastoral Work Standing Committee, 84th meeting, 11th October 1950, p-4

9. Ibid., 86th meeting 6th April 1951, p-2

225
Lessons on the life of Jesus Christ, the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Church, psychology and carnatic music were taught in the summer school for the church workers.\textsuperscript{10} A book entitled “The Psychological Approach to Pastoral Work” was recommended for church workers as reference book.\textsuperscript{11} The church workers organized Prayer meetings, Sunday Schools and evangelistic work under the leadership of the local clergymen. To do Gospel work effectively, General knowledge and religious knowledge are essential to face all questions from the public. The Bishop recommended to the Circles to supply the monthly journals ‘South India Churchman’ and ‘The Guardian’ free of cost to every clergyman with a view to equipping them with knowledge of the world and current events both in religion and politics.\textsuperscript{12}

In every church, particular days were fixed for conducting Gospel Work. So the churches had full moonlight preaching day, Gospel Sunday and Week of witness. The Evangelistic Work Committee fixed a week in September every year as week of witness for churches.\textsuperscript{13} During these days, people of every congregation participated in the Gospel work in selected villages. Tracts and Gospel portions were distributed and short messages were given.

After the evangelistic work, follow-up works were started. Proper attention was given to the newly converted Christians. Spiritual guidance was given regularly. Converted Christians became members of the congregation after taking baptism. In some centres, registers were used to mark their attendance on Sundays. Long time absentees were noted and their names were

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 94\textsuperscript{th} meeting, 7\textsuperscript{th} October 1953, p-1
\item \textsuperscript{11} Report of Literature Work Standing Committee, 52\textsuperscript{nd} meeting, 11\textsuperscript{th} March 1950, p-1
\item \textsuperscript{12} Report of Pastoral Work Standing Committee, 84\textsuperscript{th} meeting, 11\textsuperscript{th} October 1950, p-3
\item \textsuperscript{13} Evangelistic Work Standing Committee, 72\textsuperscript{nd} meeting, 25\textsuperscript{th} September 1951, p-4
\end{itemize}
brought to the notice of the members of the congregation and the committee members. These absentee-members were visited in their houses, and steps were taken to bring them to the church services. Special consideration was given to the village congregations. The superintending missionary, Rev. Lea, visited the village congregations and encouraged them. Special offerings were made for Gospel work in all churches. The amount collected through donations from the people, ‘Easter collections’ from all churches were given to the evangelistic work.

The Role of Literature in the Gospel Work

Gospel literary works play an important role in the evangelistic work. The Literature Work Standing Committee took charge of all the literary works. The Evangelistic Work Standing Committee made the necessary corrections in the manuscripts of the tracts. Then they were recommended to the Literature Work Standing Committee of the Diocese to undertake publication. These were the only recognized handbills and were to be used for the Gospel work. The tracts were printed at the Tinnevelly Diocesan Press and kept for sale in the Diocesan Book Depot. The Evangelistic Work Committee put advertisements regarding the new publications in the Diocesan magazine. This Committee introduced the ‘Methods of Evangelisation’ by G.P. Williams as a handbook for the evangelists. This book deals with various methods and ideas of evangelization.

15. Evangelistic Work Standing Committee, 62nd meeting, 25th February 1947, p-1
The Evangelistic Work Committee reprinted ‘Good News of Jesus Christ’ and ‘The Needed One’. Tracts from the Christian Literature Society (C.L.S) and the Dohnavur Fellowship were also made available in the Diocesan Depot for the evangelists. There was a great demand for tracts among the Christians. So the Evangelistic Work Committee decided to form a separate committee for that purpose.

**Diocesan Press**

The Protestant missionary, Ziegenbalg learnt Tamil from Malaiappan, a native man at Tranquebar with one motive of propagating Christianity in South India. He began translating the New Testament on 17th October 1708 and completed the work on 21st March 1711. He openly declared the need for a printing press to print the New Testament. On hearing this need, the S.P.C.K. in London shipped a printing machine, a Printer Jonas Finche, Tamil letters, papers and other needed accessories to Tranquebar in an East India Company’s ship. It reached India in August 1712. From July 1715, the press began to publish the first New Testament in Tamil language. He set up a paper mill at Poraiyar because the import of paper was too expensive and the press took much time to import. Thus the Protestant division entered in the printing field in the Tamil World. In Tinnevelly Rev.Rhenius, a missionary of the Church Missionary Society founded the Religious and Tract Society in 1822 for publishing religious tracts in Tamil for the propagation work.¹⁶

The Diocese of Tinnevelly continued the service of its missionaries in the printing field. Its Diocesan Press was the product of the bold vision of Rt.Rev.Neill. The Press functioned

in one of the halls of the C.M.S. Boy’s School (present Cathedral Higher Secondary School). In the beginning of 1913, the C.M.S. expressed its opinion that the Mission could not run the Press without any income from the Press. One of its missionaries had to spend his whole time to administer it. Rev. Carr pointed out that the building used by the press was urgently needed for educational purpose. Hence, the C.M.S. proposed that the press should be closed and the machinery sold. On 4\textsuperscript{th} October 1913, it decided to request the Superintendent of the S.P.C.K. Press at Madras to value the press. Mr. Bicknell of the S.P.C.K. press valued the press at Rs.12,000/- as a minimum price. In the beginning of 1814, the C.M.S. sold the press to Palayamkottai Printing Press for Rs.10,350/-. Thus the significant pioneer effort came to an end.

The successor of the C.M.S. Printing Press was the Tinnevelly Diocesan Press, which was opened on 3\textsuperscript{rd} September 1942 by Bishop Stephen Neill. The Diocese continued the printing work at the same place.\textsuperscript{17} The Press printed religious books and pamphlets for Gospel work and schoolbooks for the educational institutions. However, later on, it undertook the printing works on orders from the public.

\textbf{Diocesan Book Depot}

The Christian Missionaries founded the Diocesan Book Depot with the sole object of distributing the Holy Bibles, Gospel portions and Christian literature to the public. The Palayamkottai Native Church Council formulated a plan on 27\textsuperscript{th} December 1880 to open a Bookshop. The Duke of Buckingham donated Rs.1000/- for the work of the Church Missionary.

\textsuperscript{17} Tinnevelly Diocesan Council Report, 1951-1952, p-28
Society (CMS) at Tinnevelly in 1882. This timely contribution helped the Native Church Council to open a bookshop at Palayamkottai.

In the beginning, it functioned in a single room in the corner of a school building. It was for very long time a distributing agency for the Bible Society and the Christian Literature Society, Madras, engaging colporteurs to supply their books right at the doorstep of the Christians and needed persons in remote villages. In 1898, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) opened a Depot at Palayamkottai. The CMS Bible and Tract Depot emerged in March 1899. In 1904, the CMS changed the names as the CMS Book Depot and shifted the Depot to a site of the Normal School (Bishop Sargent Training School).\textsuperscript{18} Hence, the CMS shifted the Normal School to the place situated near the Holy Trinity Cathedral, Palayamkottai. After the merger of the Church Missionary Society and the Society for Propagation of Gospel in 1925, the Diocesan Executive Committee decided to change the name of the Depot. The Committee renamed it as the Tirunelveli Diocesan Book Depot in 1933. Rev.M.J.Schaffter was the first Superintendent of the Depot.

In the early years, religious books were available only in the Depot. It began to function as an independent body and started selling educational and literary books and stationery goods from the year 1915. The Governing Board of the Diocesan Depot drafted a scheme for the publication of texts in Tamil for the students of I to V classes and for the supply of notebooks on a large scale at market rates.\textsuperscript{19} The Executive Standing Committee approved the scheme, and authorized the Governing Board of the Depot, to handle the textbook publications for all the

\textsuperscript{18} Bicentenary of the Tirunelveli Church (1780-1980), Commemoratinn Souvenir, Palayamkottai, 1980, p-14

\textsuperscript{19} Tinnevelly Diocesan Council Report, 1949-1950, p-67
Diocesan Schools. In 1950, the Bishop of Tinnevelly appealed to all the heads of the Diocesan institution and the Circle Chairmen to give whole-hearted support to the new scheme. The Depot supplied notebooks to all the schools in the Diocese of Tinnevelly at reasonable prices.

The Depot published Tamil books for Standard I and II. The Government of Tamil Nadu approved the Tamil Readers for I and II classes for use in the schools. It also published a Tamil Book, Inba Vasagam, for classes III-V. The Depot published Anbarkanitham for Standard VI. They were supplied to all schools under the Diocese, the District Board and private management. This scheme increased the net profit of the Depot. Therefore the Depot raised the annual contribution of the Depot to the Diocesan Central Fund from Rs.3,000 to Rs.8,000 per year.

In the beginning, there was no competition from the booksellers in Tinnevelly. Buy in the long run, many bookshops emerged. After 1951, on account of the competition from the local booksellers and publishers, the net profit of the Book Depot went down below 5%. The Depot wanted to increase the profit by introducing new schemes. Till then, it purchased notebooks from wholesale manufacturers. The Depot proposed a plan to produce notebooks itself with paper purchased in the market from the paper-mills. The Finance Sub-Committee accepted this plan, and it sanctioned to the Depot a loan of Rs.5,000 at four and a half per cent interest for making notebooks. The committee also requested the heads of the Diocesan institutions and the Circle Chairman not to place any new orders for notebooks elsewhere.20

In 1952, the Madras Premier Company made the Depot the sole agent for all their publications in the district of Tinnevelly, Madurai and Ramnad. This development yielded a

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20. Finance Sub-Committee, 36th meeting, 14th March 1950, p-8

231
good income to the Depot as well as the Diocese and strengthened its position. The Diocese registered the Diocesan Depot as publishers with Madras Text Book Committee. Then it took more publication works and became one of the main publishers in Tinnevelly. The people in other parts of the Diocese also welcomed the publication service whole-heartedly. The Depot widened its scope to serve the entire Diocese and the public. The Diocese opened a branch of the Depot at Tuticorin on the 14th of February 1958 to serve the public of Tuticorin.21

The Depot continued the publication of textbooks till the nationalization of textbooks by the Government of Tamil Nadu in the year 1962. It constructed a separate building to house a Bindery. It bought a printing and a cutting machine with types and accessories in 1964 with a financial help from the National Christian Council, Nagpur. All these developments raised the status of the Depot as a full-fledged one in the district. The Diocese provided a residence on the spot for the Manager of the Depot with an aim to ensure closer supervision in 1975. The Depot helped the public by selling all needed and necessary things at one place. It sold various books like story books for children, Christian literatures, school books, maps, educational accessories, colorful greeting cards for all seasons, painting works, handicraft articles, prize materials, novelties, special wine for churches, serving cups, all musical instruments and their accessories in good quality and at a reasonable price. Thus the Diocesan Depot served the public with complete involvement and maintained its good name among them.

**Gospel Week**

The C.M.S. introduced the “Gospel Sunday” in 1902. The S.P.G. and C.M.S. introduced

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“Suvisesha Uooliya Varam” or “Gospel Week” in 1907. In this particular week, all the church members participated in the evangelistic work. After the formation of the Diocese of Tinnevelly, a special day was observed as ‘Gospel Sunday’ in the month of August every year throughout the Diocese and the following six days as ‘Satchi Varam’ or ‘the week of witness’ for systematic evangelistic work. The members of the Church involved themselves in Gospel work during this special week. Gramophone records were very useful means of drawing the non-Christians to hear the Gospel message through songs and music. They used big drums and musical instruments to attract the large audience and then delivered the Gospel message in simple words. They contacted the acceptant personally and instructed in Christianity. The church adopted some regulations before giving baptism for the acceptant. Firstly, the acceptant had to give their names to the local priest. They were called Catechumens. After getting the satisfactory report from the local priest, the acceptants were given baptism and their names were registered as members of the Church.

**Evangelistic Band**

The Evangelistic Band was specifically formed for the purpose of propagating Christianity throughout the district of Tinnevelly. It was functioning under the patronage of the Diocese. The Band had an evangelistic superintendent, three evangelists and two probationers. Generally, the Band selected one particular place initially as centre and then camped at that place for one month. From that centre, they visited all the surrounding villages and did Gospel work.

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During the evangelistic work, handbills and Gospel portions were distributed to the people. Life of Christ was shown by using Lantern Slides. Kathakalashepams (preaching through songs and stories) were conducted with musical instruments. These methods easily attracted the people and made them attend the whole programme with keen interest.\(^\text{24}\)

Open-air Bible preaching was done in the evenings or nights. Personal approach was made in the morning from 8 a.m. Soon they found out that such timings’ were not suitable for meeting the rural folk. So this time schedule was changed from June 1949. Accordingly open-air preaching was extended to morning also and the time for personal contact was changed from 8a.m. to 5.30 a.m. This change enabled the Band to cover more villages in a shorter period.\(^\text{25}\)

After completing the Gospel work in one particular centre, the Band shifted to other centres. This group was called ‘Itinerary Band’ of the Diocese.

Then the follow-up work began by sending volunteers to the centre. These volunteers had already been trained by the Band. Local clergymen met half of their expenses. The volunteers managed to take a personal interest in everyone in their allotted centre. They took effort to erect a prayer house with sizable number of converted Christians. From 1946 to 1948, the Itinerary Band conducted its evangelistic work mostly in the south and mid church council areas. From June 1949, the Evangelistic Work Committee shifted its work to the North Church Council area.

In 1954, the Diocese divided the Band into three batches and appointed them in the North Church Council area. Each year, they distributed nearly seven thousand tracts, in the Gospel

\(^{24}\) Tinnevelly Diocesan Council Report, 1947-1948, p-50

\(^{25}\) Ibid, 1949-1950, p-59
week. There was a mass movement in Naluvasankottai and South Achampatti in Vagaikulam Circle and Duraiyur in Kovilpatti Circle. Then the Band appointed two evangelists to teach the enquirers in all these places and to prepare them for baptism. It extended the follow-up work in Myparai, Avadialpuram and Pudukiramam in 1964 because the people in these areas showed more interest to know about the doctrines of Christianity. Sixty-three persons accepted Christ in Ayyarettiyoor, Kayaloorani and Therkuveeera Pandiyapuram. The Band visited nearly seventy five villages, within a period of six months in 1972. As the result of their intensive work, a Considerable number of people accepted Christianity at Melaseyithalai, Keelairal, Vellankuzhi, Duraiyur, Kayathar, Pudukottai, Kovilpatti, Vurulaikudi and Ramasamiyapuram.26

In 1977, there were 9 members in the Band. They worked hard for 20 days every month. They visited 158 villages in 1977 and issued 10,500 handbills and 2520 Gospel portions. Nearly 115 adults from Kizhamudimen, Ottapidaram, Karunyapuram-pudur, Sokkalingapuram and Kalangal got baptism and joined in the Church. Moreover, a considerable number of the people accepted Christianity in Karisalkulam, Kadduramanpatti, Sattankulam, Panchalamkurichi and Iyarettiyur. A stationed missionary of the Band did the follow-up work in the Kovilpatti Pastorate.27 Thus the Diocesan Evangelistic Band worked hard in the field of Gospel work and added the souls for the Church.

**Mass Movement**

The Diocese called the mass accessions into the Church as mass movement, which

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referred the accessions of group of families or scores of villages or hundreds of enquirers in a village. The Diocese had a Mass Movement Sub-Committee supervised the Gospel work and the follow-up work done in the mass movement areas. It met all the expenditure for the mass movement areas from the Mass Movement Fund. The Mass Movement Committee gave priority in the matter of allocation of grants for churches with new converts. 28 There was an Adi-dravida Mass Movement Fund in the Diocese to work among the depressed class people of Tinnevellt. Owing to the intensive effort of the diocese, the Adi-Dravidas came over ‘en masse’ to the Church. The Diocese discontinued its financial support for the Mass Movement work because of less contribution from England. Hence, some Diocesan Circles collected money from their members of the church and continued their evangelistic work in mass movement areas. The Diocese appointed the stationary evangelists in all villages where there were considerable enquirers and signs of mass movements. They concentrated their whole attention in a selected place. Their main duty was to teach the enquirers (Catechumens) and to prepare them for baptism. Twelve Adi-dravida families at Anaigudicheri embraced Christianity and changed the name of their village to Evanspuram. They used a shed as their prayer house. The clergy had much administrative and organizing work and did not have enough time to organize the evangelistic work. It affected the Mass Movement Gospel Work. More than a hundred people accepted Christianity at Kodiankulam in Madathupatti Pastorate. The local churches concentrated more on development works in their churches. These all weakened the mass movement campaign. Hence, there was no mass movement or mass accession into the church.

Children’s Mission

This mission was founded by Rev. Scott Price on 20th June 1891 and formed themselves an association with the title ‘The Tinnevelly Children’s Mission’.29 The Mission conducted its first meeting on 20th June 1891 at Osborne Elementary School, Palayamkottai. The Mission’s early names were ‘Voluntary Preachers for Children’s Work’ and Band of Hope. The Mission took great effort to cultivate the simple thoughts of Christianity in the minds of the children from their childhood. It published a monthly Children’s leaflet in Tamil namely ‘Paliar Nesan’ (Friend of the Children) with a view to implanting in the children the habit of daily devotional reading of the Bible, which was started in 1849 by the Church Missionary Society.30

The magazine contained daily notes from the Bible, interesting short stories and simple scripture puzzles, which were contributed by the Clergymen and laity. It became a popular leaflet even abroad. The Diocese sent a large number of subscribers’ copies to Ceylon and Federated Malay States. The Children’s Mission also published monthly calendars every year, which contained Bible words for daily reading. It also published ‘Perinba Geetham’ Song Books with short prayer almanacs, Bible reading cards and the Children’s Literature for schools. The Diocese widely circulated them in the Diocese of Tinnevelly. The Children’s Work Standing Committee governed the various activities of the Children’s Mission. The Secretary of the Mission administered the function and service of the mission.


237
The Diocesan Council passed a special amendment for Children’s Mission in March 1934 to decentralize the work among the children. Accordingly, the entire children’s work missioners came under the direct control of the Diocesan Councils. The Councils only supervised their work. The Diocese met all the expenses for the Children’s Mission. The Children’s Work Standing Committee co-ordinate all these functions of the Councils in their mission for children.  

The Diocese encouraged the Boys and girls of the Diocese to write stories in Tamil for ‘Baliar Nesan’ (Diocesan Children’s Monthly Magazine). The heads of the Diocesan institutions or local pastors certified to the contributor’s originality of such stories. Talented children were identified all over the Diocese through Diocesan churches and schools for utilizing their talents in the evangelistic work among the children. These selected children helped the Children’s mission of the Diocese. Flannel pictures and filmstrips were used in the Children’s Mission for conducting special meetings for the children of the Diocese.

**Youth Mission**

The main objects of the Youth work Committee were to meet the spiritual, intellectual and physical needs of the youths of the Diocese from 12 to 30 years of age and to co-ordinate all youth organization in the Diocese of Tinnevelly. Special considerations were given to illiterate and under-privileged youths of the rural areas. The Youth work standing committee named all the young men’s organizations in villages as Tirunelveli Diocesan Youth Association (T.D.Y.A.)

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village missions were requested to encourage the existing youth organizations and to start new youth associations in rural areas.\textsuperscript{32} The committee suggested to every unit of the T.D.Y.A. to select one non-Christian village for carrying out proper and regular evangelistic work.

Some booklets were distributed among the youth for spiritual guidance. Every year, the Committee arranged conference and Youth associations. In May 1950, a Youth Leaders’ Conference was held at Palayamkottai, it trained the participants to do evangelistic and social works among the youth effectively.

**Youth Camps**

The Diocese also arranged camps for schoolboys at Courtallam every year. But there was no camp for girl students. Hence, the youth work standing committee began conducting Girls’ camp for the high school girls from 1952.\textsuperscript{33} In the Boys’ Camp salvation, forgiveness and witness were the topics for the study. In the Girls’ Camp, the Speakers offered the opening address on four kinds of growth: mental, physical, spiritual and social and their role in the development process of one’s personality. The subsequent addresses were on Christ as our light, love, life and liberty. The Study Groups formed Bible Study Groups in the camps under the guidance of teachers. The teachers cleared the religious and moral doubts of the students in the Study Groups.

\textsuperscript{32} Youth Work Standing Committee, 2\textsuperscript{nd} meeting, 11\textsuperscript{th} March 1949, p-2

\textsuperscript{33} Tinnevelly Diocesan Council Report, 1952-1953, p-28
Pastoral Work Standing Committee appointed a Youth Secretary and selected seven members as volunteer Youth Workers for South, Mid and North Church Councils with an aim to concentrate more on every single area of the Diocese. They visited all the local youth groups to encourage their activities and started new groups wherever possible. The Diocese requested the entire congregation in the Tinnevelly Diocese to observe the first Sunday after Easter Day every year as Youth Sunday with an aim to encourage them in church activities. They themselves enacted dramas and conducted music programmes in the evening of the Youth Sunday. Every Church arranged special programmes on that day for young men and women, conducted the worship service in accordance with the Youth Service form, published by the Diocesan Youth Work Committee. The Youth Committee appointed a lady Youth Worker to work among the adult girls. The wife of the local Clergymen guided the members of the Girls’ Groups in studying the Holy Bible on every Sunday. The church conducted entertainment programmes like dramas, sing-song programmes and games for girls. These steps strengthened their link with the church and its activities.

**Mothers’ Union (MU) and Women’s Fellowship**

These two missions were functioning for the welfare of women. The main aim of the Missions was to build good Christian homes by rendering social and evangelistic works. The Mother’s Union was a special section for married women. Women’s Fellowship was started on 25th March 1950. It had its branches at Palayamkottai, Nazareth, Mukuperi, Megnanapuram.

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and Tuticorin. Systematic evangelistic work was done through night schools for adults, Sunday Schools and social work in slums and hospitals. They managed to share religious thoughts among women sections.

Moreover, these two Missions wanted to do evangelistic work as well as give opportunities for self-employment. So they conducted sewing classes for women. By their efforts, eighteen night schools were started all over the Diocese. Because of the Gospel work done through night schools, the total membership in the churches increased. Modern flannel graph boards and small cut outs were used for the Gospel work. The Mother’s Union published a magazine, issued thrice a year. The magazine carried articles on spiritual thoughts and suggestions for social and evangelistic work among women. Copies of the magazine were sent to the Mother’s Union branches of Kotagiri, Madras, Bangalore, Bombay and Colombo. About 25 Mother’s Union branches in England had link with the Mother’s Union branches of the diocese. They sent specimens of Mother’s Union literature free of cost for evangelistic work. The two women’s missions offered their help in doing the Gospel work here by opening night schools for adult women and doing social work.

**Educational Institutions**

Evangelistic works were carried out among the students through the institutions of the Diocese. Every year the Diocesan Children’s Mission conducted special camps and examinations. Rev. Bertie Berdoe, a missionary of the Diocese, did evangelistic work among the

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241
children in the villages and schools. In order to equip the teachers of the Diocesan schools to conduct scripture classes efficiently, books were recommended for guidance. Teachers’ Guides to Religious Education- Senior Lessons in three volumes for higher classes and Junior Lessons in three volumes for lower classes- were recommended to the teachers. The committee also introduced the book ‘King of Truth’ to the non-Christians in the High Schools. Miss. Frost prepared the Diocesan scripture syllabus for secondary schools.

In the meantime, the Madras Government issued order in 1948 against ‘Proselytization’ in schools. After that the Diocese handled the evangelistic work in institutions with greater care. A printed application for admission of pupils to scripture classes with the signature of parents or guardians was newly introduced. With the permission of the parents, non-Christian pupils were admitted to the scripture classes. Some modifications were done in the scripture lessons for moral institution classes.

The Education Standing Committee decided to educate the teachers of all institutions according to the new pattern. Special courses were arranged. In 1949 it conducted a summer school, at Courtallam for teachers. A refresher course for teachers, both men and women of the Diocesan Secondary Schools was held in Nazareth from 19th September to 24th September 1949. The main theme of the course was ‘The Christian Teacher in Free India’. Lectures were

40. Report of Education Standing Committee, 78th meeting, 18th October 1949, p-1
delivered on principles of religious education, Book of Revelation in the Bible, food, recreation, hygiene, welfare of children and sex education.\(^4\) By introducing modified scripture lessons, evangelistic work was done perfectly through the educational institutions.

**Indian Missionary Society (I.M.S.) of Tinnevelly**

The I.M.S. was established on 12\(^{th}\) February 1903 in the Diocese of Tinnevelly during the tenure of Rt.Rev.Samuel Morley (1896-1903). The aims of the society are to arouse and increase the spirit of evangelism in the South Indian Church; propagation of the Gospel in India and abroad, especially evangelizing some hitherto unapproached areas in South India.\(^5\) It published the ‘Missionary Intelligencer’ from 1904. The I.M.S. started doing Gospel work at Dornakal in Andhra Pradesh in 1904 with Mr.Samuel Packianathan of Maruthakulam, the first missionary at Dornakal. Dornakal had 178 villages. There were some uncivilized groups of people like Malas, Madigas, Manthulas and Lambadis. In 1906, a union of the workers emerged in the Diocese. Its aim was to find and organize sympathizers with the I.M.S. As a result of its effort, from 1907, I.M.S. Fancy-Sale Day was held once a year in every village and town of Tinnevelly Diocese and wherever such sympathizers are. Every year, the income from the sale was fully utilized for the work of the I.M.S.

**Voluntary help from the C.E.Z.M.S.**

The Missionaries of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society (C.E.Z.M.S.) did

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\(^4\) Ibid, 77\(^{th}\) meeting, 8\(^{th}\) March 1949, pp-11-12

\(^5\) Story of the Dornakal Cathedral, The Diocese of Madras, Madras1939, p-1
evangelistic work in the North, Mid and Western parts of the Diocese of Tinnevelly. At Nallur, the C.E.Z.M.S. supported seventeen Bible Women for Gospel work. They opened a Book Stall at Nallur for selling Gospel portions and small books with Christian messages and lectures on health and temperance.\(^{43}\) It published ‘*India’s Women*’, the monthly magazine, which was distributed through the C.M.S. office, Madras. It was a guidebook to the Bible Women working in rural areas. The C.E.Z.M.S. women missionaries were instrumental in getting women converts in Rajapalayam and Sivakasi area.\(^{44}\) They trained women in Bible knowledge and appointed them as Bible Women in various parts of the Diocese.

**Bible Women**

The early missionaries found difficulties in doing evangelistic work among the women folk. The women missionaries fulfilled the need by engaging trained women for this special work. The Church called them as Bible Women. In Tinnevelly the C.E.Z.M.S. mission introduced Bible Women in the beginning. The Diocese also appointed Bible Women in needed villages. The Bible women training centre at Satchiapuram offered special training and instruction for Bible Women for doing Gospel work among women. The Bible women taught the women in villages about the Holy Bible and the simple doctrines of Christianity in night schools. Through them, their husbands and children came to know about Gospel. In some places, grown up girls, women and widows got education through Bible in their own houses because their parents did not allow them to go out of the house. They prepared women and children for baptism.

\(^{43}\) Tinnevelly Diocesan Council Report, 1934, p-44

\(^{44}\) The Madras Diocesan Record, 1935, p-57
Bible women conducted weekly meetings for converted women Christians. Some of the newly converted Christian women faced severe opposition, persecution and expulsion from their own homes. In order to give shelter to them, the Diocese maintained a Converts’ Home at Nallur. There were fifteen Bible Women in the centre. There were five Bible women at Palayamkottai and two Bible women at Tinnevelly Town under the leadership of Miss.Nightingale. in the North Council Area, three Bible women handled eleven night schools. The Diocese engaged a Bible Women in doing Gospel Work among the Muslim women in Satankulam Circle. Due to the efforts of the Bible Women, many women accepted Christianity at Kurichi and Nallur.\footnote{Evangelistic Work Standing Committee, 94\textsuperscript{th} meeting, 11\textsuperscript{th} October 1962, p-3}

**Bible Translation**

The Madras auxiliary of the Bible Society Commissioned Rev.Rhenius to translate the Bible and he completed the New Testament and the major portion of the Old Testament. His translation based as it was on the original Hebrew and Greek, was a great advances upon the earlier work of Ziegenbalg and Fabricius avoiding the anachronisms and pseudo-classical expressions which abounded in those versions. So in the year 1823 Rev.Rhenius set to work to replace the Fabricius version of the New Testament by the version of his own. The work has many merits. It held its own in the Angelican missions for forty years. Until it in it’s turn was superseded by the Union version of 1869.\footnote{Bishop Stephen Neill, *The Story of the Christian Church in India and Pakistan*, Madras, 1972, p p-219}
Formation of Religious Tract Society

Rev. Rhenius was well aware of the reasons for the failure of the earlier missionaries and so he wanted to make the Tinnevelly mission self-supporting and self-propagating and for this reason he started the Religious Tract Society, the Widows Fund, the Dharma Sangam or the Philanthropic society and the Poor Fund. On October 31, 1822 Rev. Rhenius founded a Religious Tract Society in Palayamkottai to collaborate with a sister society which was opened on the same day in Nagercoil. All the subscribers and office bearers were Indian Christians except Rev. Rhenius and Mault, one of the Missionaries of the L.M.S. As many as 900 tracts were distributed in Tinnevelly in 1825 and 12,000 in 1827. They have come into the hands of females as well as males, among the mountains and on the plains. Tracts are an excellent auxiliary to the preacher of the Gospel, both preparing his way before him and making his footsteps to be remembered after him.

Induced by various circumstances Rev. Rhenius wrote two Tamil tracts. One is on these questions—“How has god a son?” why did he permit sin to enter into the world and why did not Christianity spread formally, but only now?-questions with which the natives puzzle themselves, and which they sometimes propose in order to puzzle others. The Second Tract is on the native and Christian Vedams, where in both are compared and the inferences drawn that the Christian only can be a revelation from God. Apart from the Tracts, the sermons on the histories of the Bible attract the people. Bernhard Schmid says that the best way of conveying moral truths and the knowledge of Christianity to the mind, of the Natives, young and old is to acquaint them with the history of our religion as contained in the scriptures.
Religious Conversions

The Results of the devoted labours of Rev. Rhenius were not long in appearing. During the first half of the period applicants for admission came individually or in small groups. The first fruit of the CMS in Tinnevelly were two residents of Palayamkottai, one a Vellala, another a Pariah, both baptized after very careful examination and much prayer in March 1822. In Thiruppuliyangudi five families numbering fifteen souls applied for admission in 1821 and after two years painstaking preparation eight of the inquirers were baptized.

In spite of many difficulties and reverses the work went forward with surprising rapidity. On 3rd August 1825 Rev. Rhenius reported that “to my own surprise” there is now in no less than 90 different villages, 838 families or above 3000 souls. The great majority of the converts came from Nadar Community, but other groups were also represented. Rev. Rhenius know that even when belief in Jesus Christ is Genuine, new converts have a long journey to make before they can be regarded as established in the faith.

Reasons for the conversion

The reports of those days are full of thanks giving for the marvelous manner in which entire villages accepted Christianity or became inquirers and in one of them Rev. Rhenius carefully examines the reasons which led to such rapid conversions. The hard conditions of those days, in which famine and disease wrought their fell harroc almost without let or hindrance made people look with favorable eye upon the Christian religion, the adherents of which appeared to
become immediately prosperous. The labourers of those days were regarded and treated by the land owners as their slaves, and the exactions and grievous oppression to which they were subjected turned their attention to Christianity and especially to the Christian villages which provided a shelter. Everywhere people longed for freedom from the hard and debasing restraints imposed by custom and social arrangements, and from the superstitions and fear of demons and evil spirits which were then the mainstay of Hinduism.47

**Holy Trinity Church**

In January 3, 1826 Rev.Rhenius laid the foundation for a new church at Palayamkottai which later took the name as Holy Trinity Church. It had the total area of forty feet length and twenty seven feet breadth. The construction of the church was completed within five months with the help of contributions from CMS, European residents in India, local Christians and a rich Hindu. On 26th June 1826, the new church was dedicated to the service of God. Eventhough many alterations had been made, the basic structure built by Rev.Rhenius remained unchanged. The people called it “Puthukkoil”. Now it is being called “Guchikkopuram”. On 3rd July 1826 Rev.Rhenius performed the first baptism in this church. This church has become a symbol of Christianity for the whole district of Tinnevelly.48

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47. Paul Appasamy, op.cit, p-39

248
Expansion of Congregations

Rev. Rhenius made frequent tour among the villages. The field was ripe into harvest having been partly prepared by the earlier labours of Jeanicke and Sathianathan. Earlier the conversions were confined almost entirely to the Shanar community. Because they were less attached to Hinduism and more inclined to embrace Christian faith than any caste of natives. But later, conversions had been extended to other communities too.


The progress of Christianity and the opposition which is made to it are noticed by Rev. Rhenius as follows:

“Everywhere the number of persons who renounce idolatry and put themselves under Christian instruction increases. In one place persecution is at a great height; a mudaliar related to

49. Christadoss, Rev. Rhenius the Apostle of Tirunelveli, A Bethel publication, Palayamkottai, 1976, p-215

249
one of our seminaristy, has expressed murderous designs, not only against the people, but against his relations and has declared “Christianity shall not be in that district”.  

The missionaries continue their visits to those villages where congregations have been formed. Rev. Rhenius was very much pleased and encouraged by their attention in large numbers. They have renounced idolatry. They listened to the instructions of Rev. Rhenius with rapt attention.

As time went on, a number of Christian village settlements were formed in various parts of the district, the mission purchasing lands in places where there was a movement and settling groups of inquirers upon it.

At the end of 1830, there were fifty six churches or chapals belonging to the CMS. Many of them were old devil shrines converted into Christian places of worship. A few were substantial buildings as those at Satankulam (1825), Palayamkottai (1826), Tinnevelly Town (1828). At the end of 1830 the congregations in 261 villages consisted of 2289 families of houses containing 8138 souls.

**Native Missionary Society**

The influence and character of Rev. Rhenius was such that catechist in the Nallur district, after hearing a sermon by Rev. Rhenius decided to form a native missionary society to preach Gospel outside the bounds of the province. This was started without any assistance from the

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50. Proceeding of the CMS for Africa and East, Twenty Seventh Year, 1826-1827, London, 1827, p-133

51. Paul Appasamy, op.cit, p-46
missionaries and even without their knowledge. The evangelists were placed under the control of superintending missionary.\textsuperscript{52} The missionary prayer meeting was full of life and interest. In these meetings not only the work in which the people themselves were engaged was remembered but prayer was offered for Christian work in all lands, and with the aid of a map before the audience, a definite idea was given of the work in progress throughout the world, as well as, of the regions yet touched by the Gospel. “Almost every social meeting”, wrote Rev. Rhenius, becomes a missionary meeting when missionary matters are communicated discussed and consulted about.\textsuperscript{53}

It concentrated the attention of the people of England and India interested in missionary enterprise upon the district of Tinnevelly and induced the CMS executive committee, at home which would otherwise have continued apathetic, to send out large number of English missionaries to deal with the Evangelistic Work.

**Christian Literature**

Literature was the main source used in the Diocesan Gospel propagation work. The Diocese easily met the educated people through Christian literature works. The Evangelistic Work Committee prepared the manuscript of handbills. Then it recommended the manuscripts to the Literature Work Standing Committee for approval and publication. The Evangelistic Work Committee used to advertise new publications in the Diocesan Magazine (Narpothagam), for the evangelistic work of the Diocese. The Education Standing Committee appointed the Scripture Syllabus Sub-Committee to draw up a syllabus for religious education.

\textsuperscript{52} Helen H. Holcomb, *Men of might in India Missions*, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1901, p-161

\textsuperscript{53} Helen H. Hoxeomb, *Ibid*, p-162

251

The Indians considered Christianity as a foreign religion and the religion of the ruling race. Before Independence, the Christian Missionaries in India received financial assistance and missionary recruits from abroad for the propagation of their religion. But this system began to lose its importance in the post-Independence period. It was not easy to take the Gospel to the people directly. Till then the C.M.S. Mission had financially helped the Diocese a lot. Every year, the S.P.G. Mission also had contributed about a lakh of rupees. In this critical situation, the Friends of Union in England came forward to financially help the Diocese. This also stopped in course of time because the Friends of Union started sending their contributions to the headquarters of the C.S.I. directly. Amidst these difficulties, the Diocese of Tinnevelly took efforts to continue the evangelistic work. The diocese constituted committees on Evangelistic Work, Pastoral Work, Literature Work, Youth Work, Children’s Work and Women’s Work. All of them participated in the evangelistic campaign of the Diocese. The evangelistic Work Standing Committee undertook all the activities in the field of evangelism.