Introduction

Modernization :

Modernization in India started mainly with the western contact especially through establishment of the British rule.[1] This contact had a special historicity which brought about many far reaching changes in culture and social structure of the Indian society. The basic direction of this contact was towards modernization, but in the process, a variety of traditional institutions also got re-enforcements.[2]

The treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 opened the gate of North east India to the British. Within a short span of time the whole area was subjugated and brought under the British administration with a common system of governance with the rest of the country. The various hill tribes of the region were clinging to primitive ideals dominated by ignorance. The British therefore felt the need to take them to the path of modernity. In the context of North East India particularly the hill tribes modernization meant taking them to the path of a civilized life fit to be called modern. No doubt the people may claim to be civilized in their own way but their civilization did not seem to conform to the civilization of the west which the world is heading. Of late, scholars from the region argued that the tribes of North East India were already civilized when the British entered the region. But civilized doesn't mean modernized. Modernization means coping with the changing world and embracing the latest trend and also how to make the best use and get benefit out of it. A society may claim to be civilized but as long as ignorance and taboos dominated their lives, modernization can not be achieved. The tribes of North East India were ignorant of how to fight the diseases. The little medicinal knowledge they knew was rude and unscientific and could not keep pace with the ever increasing diseases in the surroundings. There was total absence of hygiene like eating with unwashed hands. There were no schools and limited things were taught especially rituals, tales etc through the oral method to those who wished to learn. Materials for better living were not invented by them. These were introduced to them and to the world by the west. The fruits of modernization like modern amenities, medicines communication, transport etc had benefited all but to the tribes of North East India something more was to be done. That is to change their mentality fit to imbibe modernity. The modernization that the west followed and introduced to the world was in conformity with the planet Earth. We need ships and planes to visit distant places. We need vaccines and medicines to save ourselves from diseases.

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1. *Yogendra Singh, Modernization of Indian Tradition. Rawat Publication, Jaipur, Year 2012 (Reprint), P- 202.*
2. *Ibid P- 202.*

In order to bring the hill tribes of North East India to the national main stream, modernized outlook and attitude was necessary. But the question arises as to what should be introduced to them for achieving the goal of modernization. It was here that Christianity carrying the message of love and an agent of change as per the European's experience was chosen to change the mental out look and attitude of the people. It would therefore be not wrong to say that the modernity introduced by the British who were colonialists was colonial modernity and Christianity may be termed as an agent of colonial modernity. But the main aim of the British was to make the tribes good subjects, obedient to authority and law abiding. It was due to this that Christianity was chosen so that common conscience between the ruler and the ruled would bring commonness and reduced the chance of revolt. Before the introduction of Christianity into the area the tribes did not just give way. Revolts and uprisings against the foreign rule were manifested. But with the coming of Christianity the missionaries could now penetrate deep into the territory inhabited by these tribes. With this development the British could rule this part of India along with the rest till India achieved her independence. The other reason was the moral obligation of every Christian to spread the Good News as taught by Jesus.

Christian religion originated in the East but it was brought to India particularly to North East India by people from the west. The tenets of religion always mixed with the cultural practice of the people where it originated. The very many tenets of Islam were in fact the practice of the people of Arabia particularly the Quraish tribe to which Prophet Mohammad belonged. In short the Arabian culture came to be incorporated with the teachings of Islam. Likewise, the cultural practices of the west were incorporated in the practice of the Christians. As said earlier, the religion originated in the East but it was introduced in India and the world by the Europeans. Therefore, some traits of European culture were seen in the religion. For example, the Christmas tree, the legend of Santa Claus etc. In the Christian wedding too, the bride and the groom are fashioned with European dress. These are but western cultural imposition to non Europeans in the name of Christianity.

Modernization is adopting the prevalent mannerism in all aspects of life.[3] Modernization is a concept in the spheres of social sciences that refers to process in which society goes through industrialization, urbanization and other social changes that completely

3. *Wikepedia, the free encyclopedia, An Internet source.*

transform the lives of individuals.[4] This approach has been heavily criticized mainly because it conflated modernization with westernization. In this model, the modernization of a society required the destruction of the indigenous culture and its replacement by a more westernized one. Technically, modernity simply refers to the present and any society still in existence is therefore modern.[5] But there is exception. Some societies still exist in some parts of the world where they lead a hunting gathering life like the Hadza community of Savanna. The proponents of modernization typically view only western societies as being fully modern, arguing that others are primitive by comparision. This view sees unmodernized societies as inferior even if they have the same standard of living as western societies.[6] Opponents of this view argue that modernity is independent of culture and can be adapted to any society.[7]

Modernization is rooted in the scientific worldview.[8] It has deeper and positive association with levels of diffusion of scientific knowledge, technological skill and technological resources in a particular society.[9] But it is essential to modernization to commit itself to scientific world view, the internationalization of humanistic and philosophical view-point of science on contemporary problems and not merely the volume of technological advancement.[10] It is possible that a society as also a person might command a maximum of scientific skills and resources but a minimum of its necessary psychic and emotional requisites. It is otherwise possible that a successful scientist may be a failure as a modern human and a most affluent or technologically advanced society may also be the one which is most tyrannical. It is in this context that the meaning of modernization should be understood.[11] But where does this modernization heading to? Industrialization, the agent of modernization is choking the world. Pollution, environment degradation are its net result. Many inventions were in fact harmful and dangerous and had threatened the very survival of mankind. Poison gas, guns, bombs to name a few. These are leading to extinction of human race and other living beings from this planet. No matter how modern we may call but one day this modernization will lead us to destruction. Like science modernity is not an exclusive possession of anyone ethnic or cultural group, but belongs to humanity as a whole. This however should not mean that all modernized societies or cultures will be alike.

4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Opcit, Yogendra Singh, *'Modernization of Indian Tradition,'* P- 61.
9. Ibid p- 61.
10. Ibid P- 61.
11. Ibid P- 9.

Contemporary education which is an agent of modernization in various forms is also of the western origin. There is a huge difference between the Indian educational system and the western system. Modern education (Western education) has a fundamentally different orientation and organization. It is liberal and exoteric, and it is steeped in modern scientific worldview. Freedom, equality, humanism and denial of faith in dogmas are the themes which are not ascribed to any specific group or class but can be achieved by merit by anyone in society. Some branches of modern education such as science, engineering and medicine directly focus on a worldview which embodies the core values of modernization and imports skill to realize the goal of a modern society. The British government and western Christian missionaries worked hand in hand in this regard to make the tribes fit to be modern.

Westernization is defined by Srinivas as, "the changes brought about in Indian society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule, the term subsuming changes occurring at different levels…technology, institutions, ideology and values."[12] Emphasis on humanitarian and rationalism is a part of westernization which led to a series of institutional and social reforms in India.[13] Establishment of scientific technological and educational, institutions, rise of nationalism, and new political culture leadership in the country is all by-products of westernization.[14] But it would be appropriate to see the cultural aspect only when dealing with terms like westernization. We have not become westernized by traveling in a plane; we have not become westernized by taking a vaccine. These are a necessity in the contemporary world and are agents of modernization not agents of westernization. Therefore, westernization should mean only the cultural aspect, more so, the cultural practice of the Europeans imposed upon non-Europeans like dress, food habits, attitude etc.

Colonial Modernity

As has been seen the term modernity alludes to the socio economic and intellectual transformation that the occident had undergone since the 15th century. But modernity in non-European societies has different meaning as it traveled to these societies from Europe. To discuss and understand the experiences of the colonized societies the term used is colonial modernity. This is because a vast number of societies in the non-European formations in Asia and Africa have come to experience such Eurocentric modernity from their colonial masters. In other words modernity in these societies has been transplanted by the colonial powers.

12. Ibid P- 9.
13. Ibid P- 9.
14. Ibid P- 9.

Hence it is often debated whether what is modernity for European counties could be equally understood as modernity for the Asian and African countries. It is the vast tribal formations in Asia and Africa that bore the brunt of euro-centric notions of modernity and development which was superimposed on them and thereby stagnated and retarded their individual and indigenous development trajectories. It is not just the colonial power that imported and transplanted European modernity in non-European foundations, but even the ecclesiastical forces like the missionaries who came from Europe and America to proselytize the indigenous population in Christianity did the same. They considered indigenous people savages, their culture and social formation primitive and their faith as pagan and animist. Therefore they set out to modernize their faith by introducing Christian faith to them and converting them to a world religion like Christianity and thereby rescue them from savagery and barbarity. The idea was to upgrade them to equal citizenship with the rest of the world. In doing so they destroyed their culture and religion and transformed them radically. In the process however they introduced modern education, and literature, medicine and hygiene to the tribal. Thus European concept of modern living and modern culture was introduced to the tribal societies which in the long run helped the tribal to understand their changing world more meaningful and experience modern living style.

Christianity and Modernization

After the British occupied Assam and its adjoining areas now called 'North-East India', there had been numerous efforts on their part in order to make the people of the region particularly the various hill tribes, taste the fruits of modernization. As the hill tribes were yet to cherish the fruits of development and progress, here lies a challenge to the British government to develop these barbarians in order to bring them to the national mainstream. But the foreign masters were ever ready and ever willing to give the lesson of modernization as it will benefit them in the long run. In giving the lesson of modernization the British chose Christianity. After realizing the situation that the tribes do not just give way to the white aliens that the Authority of the East India Company decided to send Christian Missionaries among them. But why Christianity? For if the British officials were interested for civilizing the tribes fit to be good subjects, they could have chosen modern education leaving the process of proselytization untouched. But God fearing devout Christians like Scott and Jenkins felt otherwise. Many British officials in line with them felt that an uncivilized person receiving the lesson of modernization minus Christian precepts may cause more harm than good. Through Christianity, the hot blooded temper of the person might be toned down by infusing lessons

like, thou shall and thou shall not, the philosophy of Heaven and Hell where persons of bad nature shall be tormented in the everlasting fire; the person may be good, obedient, God fearing and finally a good British subject. Under these considerations, Christian missionaries got a green signal from the administrators of the East India Company to enter North-East India.

One must however not lose sight that in the beginning the British East India Company entertained no such ambitions. While providing chaplains for its own personnel, it was adamantly opposed to missionary work among the indigenous population. Time and again it refused to transport missionaries in its ships and forbade missionaries to reside in its territories.[15]

The beginning:

The Charter Act of 1813 became the turning point for Christian Missions activities in India. Prior to the passing of this act, missions activities were entirely discouraged by the British East India Company. In the case of North-East India, it was David Scott and Francis Jenkins who turned the table in favour of the missionaries. David Scott served in North-East India from 1826 until his death in 1831. He was an evangelical Christian deeply influenced by the Serampore Baptists, particularly William Carey.[16] He studied under him in Fort William College in Calcutta. He was responsible for running a private Christian School among the Garos and even invited the Serampore Mission to start a school at Gauhati. He made Cherrapunji the British Headquarters for the Khasi-Jaintia hills, and died there in 1831.

Francis Jenkins served as Commissioner from 1834. He also was an evangelical Christian. He was instrumental in promoting the interests of the American Baptist missionaries working in Assam. Christian missionaries greatly benefited in the early part of the nineteenth century from this kind of official encouragement.[17]

But the official policy of the British Government was religious neutrality. British officers were directed not to interfere with the religion of the people lest this should lead to

15. J. Herbert Kane**,** ***Understanding Christain Mission,*** Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan USA P -141 year 1978
16. O.L Snaitang, "***Christianity and Social Change in North-East India***'. P-51
17. Ibid, P- 51

unrest.[18] At first they did not allow missionaries to work in India, but the British Parliament,Under evangelical influences, forced them to do so after 1813. When David Scott supported a private Christian school among the Garos at Singamari, he was condemned for it in 1831 by the Court of Directors in London.[19] David Scott justified his action by differentiating between the Hindus and Muslims of the plains and the hill tribes of the hills. He noted that the hill tribes like the Garos and the Khasis did not have any established religion and therefore would not react to Christian work in the negative way that people of the plains often reacted.[20] Likewise, Francis Jenkins took a similar position when referring to Government involvement in supporting missionary work among the tribes. This differentiation seems to have been accepted by the Company and after 1857 by the Government of British India.

Even though the official policy of the East India Company was non-interference in religious matters, individual effort seemed to be prevalent among its officers. The actions of Scott and Jenkins and several remarks made by the officers of the Company lent a strong support to this. Mangles, the Chairman of the Directors of the East India Company made the following statement in the House of Commons, "Providence has entrusted the extensive Empire of Hindustan to England in order that the banner of Christ should wave triumphant from one end of India to the other. Everyone must exert all his strength that there may be no dilatoriness on any account in continuing in the country the grand work of making all Indians Christians.[21] The influence of the 'Great Commission' as taught by Jesus on every devout Christian seems responsible for spreading the Gospel to every nook and corner of the world. A Christian always takes pride if he or she turns a heathen to his or her faith.

Even though the Company's policy since 1793 had been opposed to the entry of new missionaries, it had not entirely prevented some from establishing themselves. The protection of Serampore by Denmark, another European power which encouraged proselytization became a happy hunting ground for early modern missionaries. The coming of William Carey to Serampore, a place free from the control of the East India Company justified this point. Missionary like Ringeltaube was not hindered by the English authorities. The London Missionary Society (L.M.S) missionaries who came with him were allowed to settle at Vizakapatnam; another John Hands was allowed to go to Bellary in 1810; and even in Bengal

18. Ibid, P – 51
19. F.S. Downs, "***Christianity in North-East India: Historical perspective***". P – 60
20. Opcit. O.L Snaitang, P - 51
21. V.D Mahajan, "***History of Modern India***" P – 88

where the difficulty was the greatest, a friendly Chaplain could sometime persuade the Governor General to cancel an order of deportation.[22] The policy was not always carried out with full rigour. Yet; the fact was that the Company claimed a power of Veto, and that any Missionary who was allowed to work in its territories was there on sufferance. Therefore, Wilberforce and Claudius Buchanan and others conducted a strenuous campaign in England to get Missionary work allowed by law.[23]

The effort of these people was successful. The Charter Act of 1813, clause XXXII contained the provision that, "Sufficient facilities should be afforded by law, to persons desirous of going to. and remaining in India, for the purpose of accomplishing those benevolent designs," i.e., the introduction among the inhabitants of India of "useful knowledge and religious and moral improvement"[24] This meant that in future missionaries were to be allowed to live and work in British India unhindered provided that they respected the authority of the local Government and that the Principle of religious freedom for all were maintained. It was therefore from 1813 that the great expansion of Protestant missions in India dates.

The Charter Act of 1813 marks the beginning of the end of the East India Company as a trading corporation. It lost its trading monopoly in India and became more obviously an organization governing the country under the remote control of the British Parliament, which was not yet ready to take full responsibility. One sign of the change of emphasis from commerce to Government may be seen in the provision of an annual sum of a lakh of rupees to be set aside from the Indian revenues for education, not specifically for Christian education. Those who were responsible for this clause had in mind the revival of the old learning of India and the teaching of western science. This grant was the forerunner of the modern system of Government grants to educational institutions. Another important feature of the Charter Act of 1813 was the setting up of an ecclesiastical establishment, consisting of a Bishop of Calcutta and an Archdeacon for each of the three Presidency towns namely, Calcutta, Madras and Bombay to be maintained from Indian revenues. Thus, the Anglican Episcopate was introduced into India. The primary purpose of this was to provide for the spiritual oversight of the Chaplain and the English churches, civil and military; it was not intended as a contribution to missionary policy, though it was bound to affect those missionaries and Indian Christians who were connected with the Church of England.

22. Cyril Bruce Firth, "***An introduction to Indian Church history***" P - 158
23. Ibid, P - 158.
24. Ibid, P - 158.

Effort of the British Government: By the end of the eighteenth century, it was abundantly clear that the next period in the history of India was to be the British period. At the turn of the nineteenth century, British rule was firmly established in the three Presidencies of Bengal, Madras and Bombay. In the next fifty years it was to be extended over large areas of the Sub-continent. In the areas ruled by Indian princes, there was the 'British Resident' to represent the 'Paramount Power'. Up to this period, British rule was the rule of the East India Company, a commercial organization which had become a Government, yet remained a Company incorporated under a Charter granted by the British Parliament and renewable every twenty years.

It was the turn of the century also that the so called modern missionary movement began in England, the U.S.A and other countries of the west. Thus, just at that time when the British power in India was being consolidated, the newly formed missionary societies were eager to begin work. It is true to say that in India Protestant missions followed the flag. By the turn of the nineteenth century, an idea developed within the rank and file of the British public that if England was to rule India, something should be done for the spiritual welfare of the Indians. Consequently, at the next renewal of the Charter, the Company had to make some concessions.

The coming of Christian missionaries from Europe and America was commented by Milton S. Sangma in the following lines, "..... One great factor that added to the cultural dimension of the people of North-East India especially the hill people was the arrival and the activities of the various Christian missions from the West. The Christian mission societies were not Government agents. These societies were formed by the individual believers and supporters of the missions. Neither did they come to North-East India on their own. Initially, they were invited by the British Government officials in their private capacity with a view to using them as instruments of taming and controlling those fierce and untamable tribes. On the other hand, the missionaries also in their zeal and enthusiasm, for spreading the message of love as taught by Jesus in the Gospel accepted the invitations and the challenges as God-sent opportunity, and more readily in North-East India as the Government officials promised protection of their lives and property....."[25]

The above quotation has two points to note, invitation on the part of the British Government officials and missionaries zeal on the part of the missionaries. In the first place

25. Milton Sangma, "***History of American Baptist Mission in North-East India***' Volume– 1 Preface.

we have to bear in mind that the British officials too were Christians and as per the teachings of Christ that had every tendency on their part to make the heathens as Christians. Equally devoted to their Motherland and their religion those white Sahibs favoured their subjects to become like them worshipping a common God. Religion binds men together and creates a sense of oneness. This sense of oneness they felt shall in every ways make their job easy as administrators. Even though it was against service rules for abetting and encouraging proselytization, many British officials had in their private capacities tried and ventured in this field. For example, on many occasions, the meetings of the missionaries were held at the Headquarters of the district under the Chairmanship of the collectors.[26] The Hindu Law of Property was changed with a view to facilitate the conversion of the Hindus to Christianity.[27] Formerly, a convert from Hinduism was not allowed to inherit property but that hurdle was removed by the enactment of the Converts Inheritance Act in 1850. Lt. Colonel Wheeler distributed tracts and was considered unfit for his post. When asked to explain his conduct he admitted that he was in the habit of speaking to the natives of all classes about Christianity and he did that "from a conviction that every converted Christian is expected or commanded by the Scripture to make known the glad tidings of salvation to his lost fellow creatures." Answering the charge of preaching conversion, he categorically admitted, "As to the question whether I have endeavored to convert sepoys and others to Christianity, I would humbly reply: that has been my object." Colonel Wheeler answers were not satisfactory but no punishment was given. Even the Governor General Lord Canning was accused of conniving at the conversion of Indians to Christianity. He was guilty of subscribing to every society which had for its aim the conversion of the natives. Lord Canning's subscriptions to the Bible Society and missionary associations were a matter of common knowledge. Colonel Sykes refuted in the House of Commons the charge that Christianity was not encouraged by the Government of return read before the House of Commons and asserted that, "It will be borne in mind that all this outlay of 2, 453, 882 Pounds in 20 years for Christian purposes was from taxes paid by heathens." He further observed, "Why in India the Company proclaimed its Christianity at the canon's mouth by saluting the Bishops when they arrived at military stations? The Sepoys necessarily asked the cause of the salute and were told it was to do honour to the Head of the Christian Church, the Lord Padre Saheb."[28]

26. Opcit, V.D Mahajan, P- 188.
27. Ibid, P- 188.
28. Ibid, P - 189.

The Commissioner at Fatehpur had put up in his own expense, four pillars at each entrance to the City inscribed in Urdu and Hindi with the 'Ten Commandments.'[29]

The missionaries' zeal on the part of the missionaries was no less significant. They regarded the conversion of the whole country to Christianity as only a matter of time and they considered it 'ripe for the harvest.' They were everywhere, not only in their Church but in prisons, schools and market places. The missionaries claimed a 'monopoly of truth' for Christianity. India was to be not only a jewel in the British Crown, but also a Christian jewel. They believed that the country was being governed for the good of its inhabitants and Christianity was a part of it.

Surely the many number of missionaries who chose this profession at a young age leaving their love ones at home and going forth to proclaim the "Good News" in a distant land with an unpredictable future seemed mind boggling. They brave the sting of men and nature and many lay dead and lie buried in those distant lands never to see and feel the warmth of their motherland. Their sacrifices for the man called the 'Man from Nazareth' who sacrificed his life while on a mission sent by God the Father was all enough to console themselves. Since their sufferings according to them were a suffering with a cause, they readily obeyed the Divine Command.

While interviewing Nancy Lewis now Mrs. Nancy Lewis Singh of the American Baptist Mid-Mission,[30] She narrated her experiences at home where talks of mission's activities abroad dominated their gossiping hours. News of distant land, of its people and its geography made young Nancy curious to become a missionary. Daughter of a Church Pastor, missionaries frequented their home and her decision to become a missionary was further boosted from the encouragement she received from her father. As most of her friends who were already in the profession were in Africa, she too wanted to go there in spite of Africa already getting its name as 'White man's grave'. When Adlai Stevenson II visited Africa in the 1960s he was dumb founded at the number of missionary graves he saw. His reaction was, "My God, I didn't know this many missionaries died here." In Sierra Leone the Church Missionary Society lost fifty three missionaries in the first twenty years. In Liberia the losses were even higher. The first American Methodist Missionary, Melville B. Cox arrived in Liberia in 1833 but died within four months of his arrival. His last words were: "Let a

29. Ibid, P – 189.
30. Baptist Mid-Mission original name was the General Council of Cooperating Baptist Missions of North America. Year of establishment 15 September, 1920. Polly Strong, "Burning Wicks' P – 53.

thousand fall before Africa be given up."[31] Destiny however seemed to be different for Nancy. She sailed for India with another missionary couple Rev Jim and Joyce Garlows and reached the District of Cachar in Assam in the year 1966. Nancy was 26 years at that time.[32] A missionary zeal was all enough for Nancy and the many missionaries of those times.

Colonial powers in many cases more or less directly exploited missions for their own ends. In the course of the nineteenth century, the colonial powers had also developed the concept of 'Civilizing Responsibility' in their colonial ventures.[33] The concern for the progress of the native people and promotion also figured in the Congo Conference in Berlin in 1885, which commenced with ceremonial evocation of the Omnipotent God.

The Conference was attended by almost all European Colonial powers. It was the colonialists strategy to try to clothe their colonial enterprise as a divine mission that of the taking up of the 'White man's Burden' to the subject people. The mutual binding between missions and Colonial politics was at its strongest where the two accepted the 'White man's Burden' as a 'genuine responsibility' which some anti-imperialist missionaries referred to as Christian imperialism.[34] The theory of Operational Unity was put in such a way so as to give the impression that colonization and missionary work were two sides of the same thing. Certainly, there were common fields of operation. Education and medical works were the areas in which missions and colonial structures were most closely integrated. The intermingling of missionary work and colonial politics had to give in very quickly when the finances or man power of missions became inadequate to perform the task. In such a case the Government offered funds to the missions for those humanitarian services. But the Government did not stop there. They carefully tried to infuse or introduce the interest of 'Motherland' in the teaching materials and in shaping the whole educational structure.[35]

Why did the Colonial power back such moves? It was not that all the colonial powers had developed such an interest in missionary work from purely religious motives. They were perhaps convinced that the 'Civilizing Influence of missions' advanced colonial places directly or indirectly. Moreover, in contrast to officials of colonial administrations they gained closer relationship of trust and intimacy with the people. In the eighteenth century, India was

31. Opcit, J. Herbert Kane' P- 156 .
32. An interview with Mrs. Nancy Lewis Singh Date of interview - 15 July, 2007. Place - Emmanuel English School, Pailapool, Cachar, Assam.
33. Laldena, "***Christian Missions and Colonialism***" P -7.
34. Ibid, P - 7.
35. Ibid, P – 7.

torn with strife caused by the contending European powers. Only one man of the Lutheran Mission, Christian Schwartz was trusted and respected by the British, French and Dutch on the one hand and the Hindu and Muslim leaders on the other. One of the Muslim princes, Hydar Ali, refused to deal directly with the British saying, "Send me the Christian; he will not deceive me."[36] Equally important, the missionaries as a rule considerably stay longer, if not for life, in the country. Therefore, the missionary movement was seen as the most effective force of colonization, not only because it did not use force, but especially since it penetrated more deeply into the lives of the people.

Reasons behind introducing of Christianity: To the Europeans, who are converted Christians; Christianity was the best choice to be introduced universally. Everywhere the Gospel followed the flag. The rulers always wanted their subjects to be a part of them at least in religious practice. Religion binds men together leading to a sense of unity, and love and good will to be practiced by everyone both the rulers and the ruled. Christianity was made to adjust with the existing circumstances. Like the other great missionary religion Islam, Christianity is an organized religion and an agent of change. The Europeans who are Christians had experienced the progress they achieved due to the acceptance of this religion. After the Renaissance, Christianity gave independence, and allows men to come out from narrow reflections of life. Whatever the people of the West achieved was due to the acceptance of this faith. An organized well established religion shall always make a group of people or community well organized and once they are well organized, nothing is impossible to achieve the path of progress and development.

As said earlier, Christianity adjusts itself with the existing circumstances. Paul (Saul) one of the greatest missionaries modified the narrow principles of the Old Testament of the Bible to a much better acceptable form. With an ever increasing Christian population within the Roman Empire, Emperor Constantine had to tolerate with the Christians and passed the Edict of Milan in A.D 313.[37] Despite persecutions by previous emperors like Caligula, Tiberius, Titus and half insane rulers like Nero and Domitian and the ruthless Diocletian, quite surprisingly, Constantine became the first Roman Emperor to embrace Christianity. By the time of Emperor Theodosius, Christianity became the official creed in the whole of the Roman Empire.[38] During Constantine's time Christian religion had made such progress among his

36. Opcit, J. Herbert Kane, P – 36.
37. C.H.C Blount (Edited), "***Davies - An Outline History of the World***:" P-211.
38. Ibid, P- 212.

subjects that it occurred to the keen mind of Constantine that it might be used as a means of maintaining unity and solidarity in the Empire. Christianity thus came to be established as the official religion. Other religious rapidly disappeared or were absorbed, and from the fifth century onwards priests in temples in the Roman Empire were Christians. With the Roman Emperor now a Christian, things changed rapidly and after the fall of the Roman Empire, other European nations embraced Christianity due to the effort of the Papacy of the Roman Catholic Church.

The path to modernization, the Renaissance: It is quite impossible to draw a hard and fast line of demarcation between the middle Ages and Modern Times of Europe. Never the less, historians agree that three great events namely, the Renaissance, the Geographical discoveries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the Reformation mark a definite transition from the Middle Ages to a state of affairs which can, with a reasonable degree of accuracy be called modern.

The French word 'Renaissance' means rebirth. The movement denotes the rebirth of learning as well as the revival of the study and interest in old classics and in the civilization of Greece and Rome. The greatest gift of Renaissance i.e., the spirit of enquiry did not spare the field of religion. There was an awakening in the minds of the people even in the principles of religion and accepted beliefs were questioned. In spite of the best effort of the Pope and the Clergy, the hold of the Church was weakened. The Renaissance was one of the great movements which helped in the emancipation of the people from the tyranny of the Church and age old customs. The movement marked the transition from the middle ages to Modern times.[39]

The Reformation and the Counter Reformation movements: The Reformation may be perceived as a religious movement which brought about a result against the supremacy of the Roman Catholic Church and established a new form of Christianity called Protestantism. As a consequence, Papal authority was fully cast off in countries where the Reformation had been successfully introduced. Reformation swept the whole of Europe and loosened the hold of the Church. In the middle ages, the Church controlled every aspect of man's life and activity. Political institutions, economic, literary and artistic activities were dictated by the Church. It was a period of absolute and unquestioned faith in Church and whatever the Church preaches was followed blindly. There were few individuals who protested mildly against the

39. Ibid, P – 19.

Church but they could do nothing to improve the situation.

The cultural rebirth popularly known as the Renaissance that Europe witnessed during the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries dealt the severest blow to the Oneness and Unity of the Church which Christ founded.[40] The study of Greek and Latin classics which became available to Europe for the first time, led to an appreciation of the beautiful aspects of life. There was a great desire to imitate the classical models which led to the revival of art and literature. Several Popes and other Church officials actively encouraged and were even directly involved in the Renaissance movement. Thus, the Roman Catholic Church lost the confidence and support of many of its own supporters. Along with the appreciation of the beauties and pleasures of life, there was also a neglect of spiritual tasks on the part of the Popes and some other Church officials. Beginning with the protest against such immoral activities of the Church officials, the honest and sincere Church leaders began to question the authority of the Pope over others. Thus set a motion known popularly in Church history as the Reformation Movement, out of which came out many independent Protestant churches such as Lutheran, Calvinism, Zwinglism. Church of England, Methodist, Ana-Baptist, Pentecostal, Baptist etc.

The Reformation began on 31 October, 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg. Luther's attack on the sale of indulgences[41] and subsequently on Papal authority and the sacraments[42] was condemned by the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor but gained the support of several German princes. The consequent conflict was not resolved until 1555.

With the spread of Protestantism, the hold of the Papal authority was weakened. The Catholic Church in an attempt to reform itself decided to remove the causes which led to its decadence. A Council was held at Trent (1545) to decide on the measures to be adopted to strengthen the Church. This self-reform on the part of the Roman Catholic Church is known as

40. Opcit, Milton Sangma, "***History of the American Baptist Mission in North East India***" Volume-1, P-1
41. The practice of indulgences arose in the early Church when confessors and those about to be martyred were permitted to intercede for penitents and so mitigate the discipline imposed on them. During the later middle ages, indulgences came to command a financial value, which led to wide spread abuse and was one of the chief causes of Luther's attack on the Church at the Reformation. Their sale was prohibited in 1567. The Oxford Encyclopedia.
42. A religion ritual having a special significance as a visible sign of an inner grace in its participants. The Roman Catholic Church and Orthodox churches accept seven sacraments namely Eucharist (a ceremony commemorating the last supper), marriage, baptism, confirmation, penance, holy orders and anointing of the sick. Among the Protestant Churches. Baptism and Eucharist are the only accepted rituals. The Oxford Encyclopedia.

the Counter Reformation.[43]

To counter the growth of Protestantism, the 'Society of Jesus' was established in 1540 or 1534 according to some writers by Ignatius Loyola, a Spanish soldier wounded in the war decided to devote the rest of his life to the service of God. The members of the association founded by him were called the Jesuits. The association was aimed mainly to popularize and propagate the Roman Catholic faith. In addition to the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, Jesuits were sworn; to go wherever the Pope might send them. They became one of the dominant forces of the Counter Reformation and played a prominent role in missions to the New World and the East. Their power eventually brought them into conflict with civil authorities throughout Europe, and in 1773 Pope Clement XIV, suppressed the order. Re-instated in 1814, the order is now active worldwide and it is noted for its schools and universities.[44]

The Reformation movement induced numerous people to claim freedom of thought in spiritual matters. This awakening brought about a revolt against the established Church which lost its age long hold on the lives of the people. The Reformation forced the Church to reform itself in what is termed as the Counter Reformation. With the advent of the Reformation, Christianity was liberalized and it became more rational. Roman Catholic missionaries worked hard to purge the Church of its evils.

With the Reformation, the European world was divided into two religious groups-Catholics and Protestants. Though it heralded the beginning of the modern age, yet the spirit of tolerance was still unknown. In reality the Reformation and the Counter Reformation ushered in a period of religious persecutions and religious wars. Protestants were persecuted by Philip II in Spain and by 'Bloody' Mary in England. Catholic subjects were punished by the Protestant rulers in Germany. The Thirty Years' War between Catholics and Protestants in Germany caused much bloodshed and havoc. Intolerance appeared to be the byproduct of the Reformation.

With the onset of the Reformation, monarchy acquired more power as compared to the Church. Henry VIII under the pretext of the Reformation deprived the Pope of his powers. The German princes were freed from the Papal hold and other European kings build their monarchies without any interference from the Church.

43. Opcit, Satish Kumar, "***Studies in world History***" P- 27.
44. Ibid, P- 27.

In England religious persecutions resulted in emigrations to America and it had much to do with the Great Civil War (1642-49), which ended in the execution of a King and a period of eleven years of Republican government. In 1685 Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes which had granted toleration to French Protestants. By doing so, he drove some of the most desirable of his subjects into exile, and seriously injured the commerce of his country. The spirit of religious bigotry did not confine to the Catholics; it is also noticeable among the Protestants communities. The English Puritans who left their native land on account of persecution and founded new homes for themselves across the Atlantic did not hesitate to persecute those who differed from them on religious matters. The old persecuting spirit took a long time to die. In England, Roman Catholics could not sit in Parliament until 1830, Jews not until 1858 and Atheists not until 1886.

The Reformation and the Counter Reformation made Christianity a worldwide religion without which the modern missionary activities for spreading the Gospel to every nook and corner would not be possible. The birth of a new distinct religious group the Protestant to counter the existing Roman Catholic Church hastened the spread of the Gospel. In India, from the time when Thomas, one of the disciples of Jesus arrived in 52 A.D. and was followed by the missionaries of the East Syrian Church around 250 A.D. to 300 A.D, there was a long and silent gap until the Portuguese missionaries arrived in the fifteenth century followed by the Danish mission.[45] But the effort of these missions was meager and without much rigour perhaps due to the absence of any rival.

After the Counter Reformation group particularly the Society of Jesus revived Catholicism in Europe, the priests started travelling to different parts of the world as teachers and missionaries. The geographical discoveries made during the period gave them access to different directions of the globe. The Jesuit missionaries in trying to spread Christianity in the new lands worked with fanatic zeal to fulfill their mission at all costs. India too was not spared and the first Jesuit missionaries namely, Fr. Stephen Casella and Fr. John Cabral arrived in North East India in 1626 A.D.[46] The Protestant missionaries which consisted of different denominations and despite their internal bickering and differences followed suit with the arrival of William Carey on 11 November 1793 at Calcutta.[47] Thus set in motion the influence of Christianity in North East India.

45. Opcit, Milton Sangma, "***History of American Baptist Mission in Nrth East India***" Vol.- 1, P- 14
46. Ibid, P – 14.
47. E. Ritcher, "***History of Christianity in India and Assam***" Rivenburg, Philadelphia USA, P- 2. year- 1941.

Modern Imperialism and Modern Missionaries: No account of the development of modern imperialism would be at all complete without some references to the part played by Christian missionaries. When the modern missionary movement got under way 250 years ago, it coincided with the thrust of western imperialism into Asia, Africa and Oceania. During the heydays of imperialism Christian Missions work in cooperation with the colonial governments, implementing and supplementing their programs of educational and social reform.[48] World War II marked the end of the colonial period; and except for a few pockets of colonialism here and there the system is forever dead. The gunboats have been recalled and the white sahibs have all gone home. The Christian missionaries should do the same thing. This reasoning is common.

Every time when there is riot or revolution with anti-western overtones, someone is sure to demand the withdrawal of the missionaries. Even without riot or revolution there are those who insist that the missionaries represent the last vestiges of western imperialism, and as such should be recalled. To clinch the matter they ask: "If the national governments can function without the colonial administrators, why can't the national churches get along without the missionaries?" To all such people the missionaries at best are superfluous; at worst, they are downright dangerous. In either case they should have the good sense to come; or they should be recalled.[49]

But the missionary's identification with imperialism was one of the unfortunate accidents of history. They did not plan it that way and were happy when the unholy alliance was terminated. If, as the critics say, it was a mistake for them to go in with colonialists, surely it would have been a mistake to come out with them.[50] Two wrongs don't make a right. To have come out with the colonialists would have confirmed what the nationalists and the communists have been saying all along.

The missionary task has not been completed. There is still an enormous amount of work to be done. To call it quit now would be to jeopardize all that has been accomplished up to this point. To compare the national government with the national Church is grossly unfair to the latter. The former is in control of the entire country and has the support of all the people.

48. Opcit, J. Herbert Kane, P - 16.
49. Ibid, P-16.
50. Ibid, P- 17.

Moreover, it has access to sufficient funds to implement its programmes regardless of the cost. By contrast the National Church in some countries represents only 1 or 2 percent of the population. To maintain its existing work strains the budget to the limit. In all such places the mission will be needed and wanted for years to come. In many parts of the non-Christian world, Church membership is barely keeping with the population growth; in other parts it is falling behind. There are twice as many non-Christians in India today as there was when William Carey arrived in 1793.

The World Missionary Conference which met in Edinburg in 1910 put forward the following paragraph regarding missionary nexus, "It would be an impossible task to enumerate the services rendered by missionaries to governments. It would, in the first place, be impossible always to draw a dividing line between the aim of the missionary and the government. Missions aim not merely at securing the spiritual enlightenment of the individual, but also at promoting the healthy social life of the community. Governments likewise, aim at enhancing the welfare of the people. In this field, therefore, governments have been spared much expense and great care by what missions have done. Of forms of service lying outside of strictly religious works in which missions have done work of a type which governments appreciate and themselves undertaken. We can only make passing mention. In exploration, scores of missionaries have been pioneers; in sociology, their observations have contributed a mass of material of the highest value. Many languages have by them reduced to writing, their grammatical principles ascertained and recorded, and development of a literature has been begun. Their study of developed languages has enriched philology and all human culture. Their educational work has been vast and inspiring. In establishing the printing press and introducing the school book, the newspapers and healthful literature of all kinds, they have again and again been pioneers. By their medical work they have not only alleviated the sufferings of millions, but have also powerfully promoted the cause of public health, while destroying the malignant influence of pretenders to magical powers. By their influence with the people and their dissemination of higher principles of life, they have often made possible the acceptance and enforcement of good laws which without them government would have feared to pass and would have been unable to make effective."

In some respects, the imperialistic activities of modern nations had admirable consequences. In many undeveloped countries, efforts were made to improve the people both mentally and materially. Jungles were slowly cleared, prairies cultivated, means of transport

enormously improved and diseases fought and conquered with a courage which is at least as great as that of the soldier in battle.

But imperialism has not always developed in this way. Incidents like the Congo atrocities and the conquest by force of unwilling nations followed by shameful exploitations. Not one of the great empire building countries has a clean record in imperial matters. Even the British Empire which was established mainly for commercial reasons and it would be absurd to imagine that it ever maintained for purely philanthropic purposes.

Early contact by the British with the hill tribes of North East India: Prior to the Yandaboo treaty (26 February 1826), David Scott, then Magistrate of Rangpur got the chance to deal with the Garos who are one of the hill tribes of North East India. This happened when the Company became the de facto Authority in the Bengal Presidency in 1765.[51] The exaction of the Zamindars and choudhuries of Karaibari, Mechpara and Kalumalupara in the form of charging duties on articles bought and sold against the Garos and the latter frequent raids for procuring human skull relating to their funeral ceremony led to a feeling of insecurity in the border areas under the jurisdiction of Fort William. Under such circumstances, the authorities in Calcutta advised Scott to proceed hurriedly to the place of occurance.[52] As the problem was due to the thirst for revenge against the zamindars and partly by the barbarous act of a backward tribe, Scott was instructed to adopt measures leading to permanent peace in the area and promote the gradual civilization of the turbulent tribe. Thus, David Scott with the approval of the Governor General in Council introduced a new system of administration known as the Non-Regulated System.[53] This new system as embodied in Regulation X of 1822, seemed acceptable to the Garos. By dint of his intimate knowledge with some of the tribes the responsibility to run the new office fell on Scott himself.

From Non-Intervention to Open Intervention: By the close of 1823 all was not well with the political situation in North-East India. The Burmese had invaded Assam, overrun Manipur and thus threatened the British Government and its protectorate states in the region. In view of this threatening situation, their watch word, 'Non-Intervention' was discarded and on the ground of saving the company's territory, England declared war against Ava (present Myanmar) on 5 March, 1824.[54] The Victorious British in the First Anglo Burmese war and the

51. H. K Barpuzari, "***Problems of the Hill Tribes***" Vol-1, P-20.
52. Ibid, P-23.
53. Ibid, P-25.
54. Ibid, P- 27.

treaty that followed (Treaty of Yandaboo) gave the Imperialist an opportunity to administer over a large lucrative area for deriving maximum economic benefit. Keeping in mind the prospects that lay ahead, the whole area was brought under their control within a short span of time either by annexation or by conquest.[55]

The problem before the alien master: It is not easy to rule over a territory effectively if the subject people are backward and cling to primitive ideals. This was true in the context of North East India especially the hill tribes. With head hunting, diseases, poverty and tribal feuds, the hill tribes were yet to take the path of a modern civilized life and here lies the fact that the 'civilizing role' of the British tallied with their claim. The tribes were always at war with one another. If an injury was done by one to another clan or tribe, it was incumbent on the injured to avenge the wrong doer. To take an example, Hamilton writes, "Amongst the Garos relations of the person killed, are by custom, held bound to demand blood for blood, and ought to be put to death either the murderer or one of his kindred or at least one if his slaves.[56] To satisfy the wrath of an injured at times, demanded the not merely of the murderer but the members of his whole family and the feud also descends as a heirloom on the children. It was not a rare occasion therefore to see clan against clan, family against family as if miniature warfare was the order of the day."

In the initial years contact with the hill people by the white missionaries was made mainly in the local haats. Preaching, singings, distribution of Gospel tracts besides other proselytization process were mainly done in markets where people assembled in large number. The Karbis who live in the vicinity of Nowgong town were thus the first to have a contact with the American Baptist missionaries stationed at Nowgong. Likewise, Subongmeren, the first Ao Naga convert happened to get the Gospel news from Godhula Brown at the weekly market at Sivasagar.[57]

Living a life of isolation and seclusion the hill tribes of yester years in North-East India were satisfied with what they had with nature's fullest blessings. Those in the hills hardly come down to the plain except maybe once or twice in a year for the purpose of purchasing salt from the haat. Their wants were limited and their economic needs were met

55. Annexation of Lower Assam 1826, Upper Assam 1838, Cachar 1832, Jaintia Kingdom 1835, Gobha 1835, Khasi Hills 1838, Sadiya (Khamti) 1843, North Cachar 1854, Garo Hills 1873, Lotha Naga Territory 1875, Mizo (Lushai) Hills 1892, and Ao Naga Territory 1899. B. Burman Roy, '***Elements of History***' PP-30-48.
56. F. Hamilton, '***An account of Assam***' P-91.
57. O. M. Rao, '***Among the churches of the hills and Valleys of North East India***.'P-56

entirely in the hills where they practise Jhum cultivation following the 'Slash and burn' method. Here, they cultivate known vegetables like yam, pumpkin, cucumber, chilly, mint, sesame etc. along with paddy. The Karbis rear the eri worm and cultivate cotton. Through these, the womenfolk who are expert weavers supply enough clothes for the entire family. The surrounding jungles supply all their requirements. Fishing and hunting and along with the domestic animals, meat and fish was plentiful for them. The jungle too provided them with edible leaves, roots, insects and known medicines. The family retires to bed early and get up early, ready for work right from the early hours. Another reason for their early retirement to bed was the absence of any apparatus to make the windowless house bright. Kerosene, lamps and lantern were a latter possession and were never heard of. This had led the tribe to preserve the fire burning for many years in the verandah of the house. The absence of a readymade lighter or match box and not so easy method of procuring fire might be the other reason for the preservation of fire for years altogether. The art of the procurement of fire is hard. A dry easily combustible jungle bamboo is required for the purpose. The Karbis called it 'Me Kelap,' literally meaning, 'rubbing fire'. It requires strength, endurance, and stamina on the part of the practitioner. In a lighter vein, they say that if a young man is successful in making the fire come out through the process of 'Me kelap', time is right for him to marry. As fire procurement from the only method was hard, it became necessary to preserve the fire. The burning fire also protects them from wild animals. With limited wants and that too supplied by nature's bounty the tribe survived and these were the main causes of isolation from the people of the plain.

Primitive or uncivilized? :- Judging from the modern sense, the hills tribes of North-East India during the Pre-British period were uncivilized. But it would be more appropriate to call the tribes primitive rather than uncivilized. True, some of the tribes in the region practiced head-hunting but they were not cannibals. Sukafa, the first Ahom king in order to tame the Nagas made them eat the flesh of their relatives.[58] How hard it must have been for them to do it.

We also find the degree of difference in the meaning between 'civilization and' modernization. Modernization in India came with the Europeans but civilization did not come with them. In fact India was far ahead of Europe in this regard. We have an advanced civilization more than 3000 years ago. Many of Indian sciences were taken to Europe. But at the same time, the Indian Sub-continent did not witness a common pace of development.

58. Opcit, H.K Barpuzari, P-16

Development differs from people to people and from region to region.

Early contact of the missionaries with North-East India: The earliest recorded visit by the Christian missionaries to North-East India was made in 1626 by two Jesuit missionaries, namely, Fr. Stephen Casella and John Cabral who were probably looking for a passage to Tibet and China.[59] They travelled as far as Pandu, a few miles west of Gauhati, which was the border between the Ahom kingdom and the Mughal territories. In his letter written from Bhutan dated the 4th October, 1627, Casella gives an account of their visit to Goalpara and Kamrup in Assam. This letter however does not contain any mention of any local Christian at the time. Later, there grew up two Catholic Churches; one dedicated to 'Our lady of the Rosary' and the other to 'Our Lady of Guadalupe' at the Mughal garrison at Rangamati in Goalpara district of Lower Assam in 1696.[60] F.S Downs has mentioned that the Christians in these two places might have come with the Mughal army of 63,000 men that Aurangzeb had sent against the Ahoms in 1669 or may be the first fruit of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Jesuit mission to the Mughals.[61]

It was the practice of the Indian rulers, both great and small to buy the services of Portuguese and Indo-Portuguese soldiers to serve in their armies as gunners, doctors and surgeons and to man their frontier forts. The Indo-Portuguese 'Filhos de India' was either children of the Portuguese through Indian women or Christian converts who had adopted the Portuguese way of life. While 'Filhos de Lisbon' were Children of the Portuguese of pure blood.[62]

At this time the Catholics numbered about 8000 of whom a significant number (about 1000) seems to have been 'Filhos de Lisbon'. The Rangamati Christians were paid for their services with the jagir of lands at Ossumpur, a place further down the Brahmaputra.[63] Portuguese records likewise refer to a Christian community of Chiroto (Sylhet) which seems to have later disappeared. The only Centre that retained small numbers of Indo-Portuguese Christians was Bondashill near Badarpur and Mariamnagar near Agartala. With the British acquisition of Bengal, these Indo-Portuguese Christians, all 'Filhos de Indians' or Indian converts appears to have the service of the Rajas of Cachar and Tripura. They however retained their faith and identity despite lack of care from priests and missionaries. Thus, it is

59. Opcit, Milton Sangma, P-14.
60. Opcit, Laldena, P-18
61. F.S Downs, '***Early Christian contacts with North East India***' Vol. 5 P- 69-70.
62. S. Karotemprel SDB, '***The Catholic Church in North-East India***'. P-31.
63. Ibid, P-32.

clear that the earliest Christian contacts with North-East India were made by the Roman Catholic missionaries and the first Christian Community in North-East India were also the Roman Catholics.[64]

Modern missionary work in India and in North-East India dates from 11 November, 1793, the day upon which William Carey landed in Calcutta. Hence, it was William Carey who first set in motion the influence of Christianity in North-East India. Carey founded the Serampore College in 1818 with a view to train the Indians for missionary work.[65] At the instance of David Scott the Commissioner of Assam, the Serampore Mission of the British Baptist Society opened a mission and a school at Gauhati in 1829.[66] The British Baptist Mission of Serampore also established a station at Cherrapunji in the Khasi Hills but work in both these stations was discontinued after the dead of the last Serampore Trio in 1838.[67] The first local people to become Christians seem to have been two Khasis U Duwan and U Ana and an Assamese baptized by Krishna Pal, the first Serampore convert at Sylhet in 1813.

After David Scott, Francis Jenkins became the Commissioner of Assam. During his tenure the American Baptist Missionaries from Myanmar (Burma) opened a station at Sadiya in Upper Assam at the invitation of the Commissioner in 1836. Of course, the original objective of this mission was to find ways of reaching the Shan territories of northern Burma and the interior of China. It was not until 1841 that it turned its full attention to the inhabitants of the Brahmaputra valley. For the next twenty years it worked around the three churches organized in 1845 at Gauhati in Lower Assam, Nowgong in Central Assam and Sibsagar in Upper Assam.[68] During the 1860s the American Baptists began work among the Garos of present Meghalaya. During the 1870s and 1880s the Baptists had also begun work in Nagaland. But except the Ao tribe, other tribes did not respond to the Gospel message until the third and fourth decade of the Twentieth Century.

The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist later renamed as the Welsh Presbyterians took over the British Baptist station at Cherrapunji in 1841. There they established the Nongsaulia Church in 1846 or 1847, the first Church to be organized in the hills.

The Basel Mission opened a station at Tezpur in the North Bank of the Brahmaputra;

64. Opcit, Milton Sangma, P- 17.
65. Ibid, P- 19.
66. Ibid, P-19.
67. Opcit, Cyril Bruce Firth, P- 267.
68. Ibid, P- 268.

later in 1862 the Anglican society took it over from them. The work of the Anglican Church was mainly among the Bodo tribe and thereafter, they confined themselves to the tea garden labourers in Upper Assam.

The American Baptist Mission in Burma made the first attempt to establish its mission station in Manipur, a former Princely state as early as 1836.[69] But this was not possible because of the opposition from the local native government which had already accepted Vaishnavite Hinduism as a principal religion by a Royal Edict in 1705.[70] But in spite of this drawback, James Johnston, the Political Agent of Manipur made every arrangement for any missionary who would be willing to work among the people of the state. The first missionary who went to Manipur with full patronage from a British official, Mr. A. Porteous, the Acting Political Agent was William Pettigrew from the Arthington Aboriginese Mission Society; named after Robert Arthington a millionaire at Leeds near London. Pettigrew started his work at Imphal on February 1894.

When the Lushai hills, present Mizoram gradually came under the grip of British control, William Williams, a Welsh missionary who had been working in Khasi hills, took it as the 'fullness of time' to proclaim the message of the Gospel among the Mizos (Lushais) and rushed to Aizawl on 20 March, 1891.[71] Williams visit seemed to be primarily investigative in nature. He was aware of the new emergent situation with the prospect of political stability in the Mizo (Lushai) hills. What he did was to immediately appeal to the Home Board in Liverpool on the urgency of the need for missionary work in Mizo hills. The Board favourably reacted to the appeal and after getting the permission from the British officials in Assam, it formally adopted a resolution at the Machynleth General Assembly in June 1892 making Mizo hills as a part of their mission field. Although the whole of Mizo hills of present Mizoram was the proclaimed field for the Welsh mission, its missionaries focused their attention more to the North Mizo hills. Lack of support from the Home Board for opening a sub-station in the South and the earthquake of June 12, 1897 which destroyed the Welsh Shillong compound where rebuilding was the need of the hour, led the Welsh mission to presently concentrate only in North Mizo hills.[72] With much reluctance, the field was handed over to the British Baptist Missionary Society by the General Assembly held in Liverpool in 1902.

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69. Victor H. Sword, '***Baptists in Assam***' P – 116.
70. Opcit, Laldena, P -31.
71. Ibid, P - 43.
72. Ibid, P- 46.

Like other Protestant missions, revived Roman Catholic interest in Assam was associated initially with attempts to find an easy route to some other places. In1850. Assam was attached to the Vicariate Apostolic of Lhasa which had been created by the 'Holy See' in 1846 and entrusted to the Societies des Missions of Paris. With efforts to reach Tibet having failed, Assam was returned to the jurisdiction of the Vicariate Apostolic of Bengal after Fr. Krick and Bourry were killed by a Mishmi Chief Kai-ee-sha in present Arunachal Pradesh in 1854.[73] From 1870 Assam and Bhutan were attached to the care of the foreign missionaries of Milan. Significant missionaries work began after 1889 when the Prefecture Apostolic of Assam, Bhutan and Manipur was created and entrusted a young German Order, the Salvatorian Fathers. Seeing the Protestant success in the hills, the Salvatorian Fathers made Shillong their mission capital. The First World War brought Roman Catholic missions to a standstill and disrupted the work of others. But by 1921 Roman Catholic mission once again became active when the Holy See entrusted the Assam mission to the Silesians of Don Bosco.

The Comity system of the Protestant denominations: As the century wore on and more and more missionary societies appeared on the scene it became necessary to draw up comity agreements to eliminate overlapping and competition and to ensure a wise and equitable distribution of the available resources both men and money. Comity was the term used for a gentle man's agreement whereby one mission agreed not to intrude in the territory or interfere in the work of another mission in the same country.[74] To begin with, it sounded rather negative in its connotation; but with the passing of time it came to involve mutual recognition and common agreement of national workers, salary scales, standards for Church membership, Church discipline etc.

The Comity had several achievements to its credit: It permitted the most economic use of missionary resources; It offered the quickest and most effective means of evangelizing a given country and ultimately the whole world; It helped to avoid confusion on the part of the converts; It tended to eliminate, or at least reduce, denominational rivalry; It helped to standardize as far as possible the principles and practices of the various missions.

From time to time attempts were made to set up a board of arbitration to settle disputes when Comity was violated but these did not succeed. Comity worked better in some countries than in others. It work beautifully in the Philippines but was virtually ignored in Japan. The

73. Opcit, H.K. Barpuzari Vol-II, P-50.
74. Opcit, J. Herbert Kane P-150.

Seventh day Adventists, Jehovah witness and the Mormons have never paid any attention to Comity. The Southern Baptist had likewise been a law unto themselves and established churches in cities where other denominations had existed for decades. The entry of these mentioned churches to the field was rather late as compared to others and as such found no alternative but to intrude into others territory.

The coming of the Christian missionaries among the Karbis (Mikirs) and the response from the tribe : Contact with the Karbis (Mikirs) was made first by the American Baptist missionaries from their Nowgong Station. The Karbis who do not have a political homeland of their own, settle in different areas of central Assam and a sizeable population occupy the plain areas of present Nagaon district of Assam. As they frequented the Nowgong haat (market), contact was made by the missionaries in the haat. It was thus the Karbis who live in the vicinity of Nowgong town that received the Gospel message first and the first convert from the tribe too belonged to the plains of Nowgong. Scattered as they are, penetration was made to the hill areas of present Karbi Anglong after getting useful information from the group who frequented the Nowgong haat. A detail of the missionary endeavour shall be highlighted in chapter 3 and 4 respectively.

The next missionaries to work among the Karbis of the present Karbi Anglong district were from the Presbyterian and the Roman Catholic Church. These missionaries entered the area from the Khasi and Jaintia hills of the present Meghalaya state and worked among the tribals who inhabit the border areas. Initially, interior penetration was avoided by them probably due to the existence of the Comity system. Therefore, major proselytization and other secular works fell into the hands of the American Baptist Mission.

In the long history of proselytization undertaken by the American Baptist Missionaries, the Presbyterians and the Roman Catholics, only a single instance of mild resistance was recorded by the Missionaries. The Karbis as compared to others are mild and well cultured and always showed signs of ready obedience. On the other hand, they are timid and are slow to respond to the process of change. When E.P. Scott, an American Baptist Missionary designated to the Karbis went to the people, he was resisted by the people to preach the Gospel. When the villagers came with spears and swords, Scott a good singer and violinist started singing. The Karbis are music loving people and so they stopped resisting Scott and allowed him to preach the Gospel.[75]

75. P.H. Moore, '**The American Baptist Missionary Union Report**' Nowgong, December 28-29, 1886, P- 33.

While Christianity was allowed to be preached by the tribe, the acceptance on the part of the tribe is another thing. It was crystal clear to the tribe that Christianity came with an authority. Alongside the missionaries, there were the Government's officers who were Christians and a strong supporter of proselytization. Hence, opposition to it they felt would invite a direct interference by the Government agents. The Karbis are mild and timid and lack a resurgent spirit. For many religions is just a mere duty than spiritual obligation. The slow and timid nature of the tribe was exposed when some early converts turned back to their old ways. The oldest local Church in Karbi Anglong, the Tika Baptist Church had celebrated its centenary in the year 1997 and the total Christian population of Karbi Anglong district (inter denominational) even today is just a mere 14.26 per cent.[76]

But why some from the tribe accepted the new religion? Well, certainly there should be innumerable number of causes to these early few converts who decided once and for all to follow the white Sahib in matter of conscience. In the initial stage change always affects those who reason and judge himself or herself where he or she stands. Here, I take an example of a person Langtuk Teron by name an inhabitant of Tika hills who later became the Headman of Tai-ikpi village. Langtuk Teron decided to become a Christian due to differences in taking the seriousness of the pagan religion between him and his brother. As per the practice of the tribe, only one among the brothers is authorized to conduct the religious rituals for the whole family. This is also applicable to the cousins as well. The person who is called 'Kurusar' in Karbi is taught all the rituals including the chanting of the mantras by his predecessor. In times of his absence and inability to conduct a ritual, a deputy may be appointed but it all depends on the good will of the Kurusar. Another point to note is that this duty may be conferred to any one among the brothers. In the family of Langtuk Teron, his younger brother happened to be the one who conduct the family religious rituals. As every misfortunes sickness, diseases and even invoking of the gods for general wellbeing require a religious ritual, the Kurusar became important and this status at times made him selfish and stubborn. Being God fearing and religious, Langtuk Teron always performed all these religious duties but sometimes non-cooperation from his younger brother made him disappointed. At one incident, when sickness occurred in the house and a ritual had to be urgently performed, his brother even after repeated calls did not turn up and instead spent his entire day drinking liquor. This made Langtuk Teron utterly disappointed and developed in his mind a point of no

76. Report Submitted by the Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention to Baptist World Alliance 19 December,2007.

return. He decided to become a Christian and took Baptism in the year 1912.[77] Langtuk Teron after becoming a Christian remained true to his faith. He even had a quarrel with Rev. W.R. Hutton who on one occasion broke the Sabbath. At a ripe age he learnt the alphabets during his leisure time in the Jhum and can read the Bible. He was a quick pedestrian and could walk up to Nowgong from Tika, a distance of not less than 80 Kilometers returning the same day. Langtuk Teron was an expert lac grower. In 1931 Sir Larry Hammon after receiving a note from Marar, the D.C. visited the Lac farm at Tai-ikpi. On reaching, Sir Larry Hammon presented a Certificate of 'Progressive Cultivator' and a bottle of Foreign Liquor to Langtuk Teron. Langtuk Teron along with his associates namely, Pandit Rongbong Ronghang, Rongbong Phura, Sarsing Teron Basiko and Sar Keding Tisso were taken to Ranchi for further training on Lac cultivation.[78] Like Langtuk Teron there were many other positive thinkers who failed to find solace in the present system and offered to become Christians. The costly rituals involving a huge amount of money and the ill effect of liquor where its uses is an inalienable part of the religion too may be reasons to some for their shift to Christianity.

The costly rituals which involve a huge amount of money somehow managed to stay up to a time where articles for conducting religious rituals were readily available in the surroundings supported by a little effort. With no dearth of food and other necessities, they were able to meet the demands for survival as well as performing one's religious obligations. But with the passage of time the yield from the soil became lesser and lesser and the increase of population became an additional burden. Therefore, the majority of the tribe find it difficult to make both ends met. As this trend emerges, a negative practice developed in the plains where the bulk of the tribes are located. In order to fulfill one's religious obligation, which is a must, land was sold or mortgaged to the plains men or anyone who had the capacity to take it. In this way the process of land alienation started. The modus operandi of this process is that, a person who needed money will go to a local Mahajan and ask for money in lieu of his land. This giving and taking of money between the needy person and the Mahajan continued in times of need and reaches an enormous amount which is beyond his capacity to repay. The end result is that the concerned person has no option left but to part with his land. *(When my father shifted from the hills and settled in the plains some forty years back, the situation was the same as I have narrated. There were some families who own a huge plot of paddy land but*

77. An interview with Samsing Teron, a National Award Winner for Individual Achievement and Distinguished services to the Nation. Date of interview 21st December, 2007. place- Pharkongchehi, Hongkram West Karbi Anglong.
78. Barelong Terang, '***The history of Karbi***' Page - 57 Unfortunately, the name of Langtuk Teron did not appear in the book. This was an error on the part of the author.

costly rituals like Chojun and Chomangkan or Chomkan had made them landless). Selling and mortgaging of fertile plain land is thus in some way linked to the religious rituals. Of course drunkenness which leads to laziness has played its own part in taking this immature stand. The landless persons have no other way but to fall back on Jhum or be a daily wage earner. But persons of this nature still cling to the traditional faith not knowing the cause of their backwardness. As religion should always stand for progress and development but how much the traditional belief has contributed to the progress or backwardness of the tribe is for us to judge and see. Of course, to an economically sound person it sounds absurd, but to the majority who settle in the villages, this is a fact.

Instead of accepting an unheard new foreign religion, acceptable modification of the existing religion could have been done to avoid the changing trend. But modification needed a reformer who should have all the qualities in him to make his fellow members agree to his plan of change. Unfortunately, such a person or persons did not appear from the tribe to withstand the process of proselytization undertaken by the Christian missionaries. Now, economic compulsion has led costly socio-religious practice like the Chomkan almost given up. Only one among a thousand could do and manage it and that also, if he has the will. Economic matters might have made the tribe abandon this costly practice but in matters of religion this abandonment is not justified. It is said that the soul of a dead person should be sent to Chom-me, Phang-me that is Paradise or heaven or a place of eternal abode. If the ritual is not performed the soul of the deceased will loiter in the vacuum. Such dead soul will not reach its destination. One must wonder how many Karbi souls will reach the eternal abode when the practice of Chomkan is almost given up.

An interesting but sad incident took place near Tika hills. There once lived a rich Mauzadar in the vicinity of Tika. A Mauzadar is appointed by the British Government for the purpose of collecting tax from the people. The Mauzadar wanted to conduct the Chomkan for his dead parents so as to make the souls of his dead parents find peace and reach the eternal abode. Due to his enormous wealth the Mauzadar declared that the Chomkan for his dead parents would be held not just one time but three times. Accordingly, he advised the female dirge singer called ‘Uchepi’ or ‘Charhepi’ the main person involved in the ritual to lead the souls halfway to Paradise in the first Chomkan. After some years he again conducted the second Chomkan and told the Uchepi to take the souls of his dead parents up to the entrance of the eternal abode or ‘Chom’. His plan was to make the souls of his dead parents reach its destination only in the third Chomkan. Unfortunately, after the performance of the second

Chomkan his health deteriorated and with this his economic condition went down to an extent that his obligation to conduct the third Chomkan became next to impossible. He also started to see vision and dreams of his dead mother and father telling him to conduct the final phase of the Chomkan since they are waiting and standing at the entrance of the eternal abode. But the Mauzadar failed to conduct the final phase and in this way as per the belief, the souls of the dead parents never reach the desired destination.[79]

The admirable nature of the white was another factor which enthralled the simple minds of the tribe. To them the white men are superior and must be imitated. They come from a distant land to rule a country like India. They have power upon the evil spirits; overcome all taboos, hunts down fearful man eating tigers which were a menace for the tribe. Surely they were superior and the God they worship and revere too should be a powerful God with all the good qualities. Thus, to a simple Karbi mind superiority on the part of the white Sahibs was something admirable and they thought it wise to follow and be like them.

The plain people specially the Assamese are professed Hindus and have been living in close Proximity to the Karbis and other tribes from a long-time. Even though the Karbis are not Hindus, Hinduism has very much influenced and penetrated in their belief and ways of life. The taboos, the superstition, the multiplicity of gods, spirits of both benevolent and malevolent all have pointed to their leanings towards the religion. The only phenomenon that makes them a separate distinct religious group in spite of the influence of Hinduism was that they have not declared themselves as Hindus. It was after the post independent era that consciousness on the part of the Hindus developed and a kind of magnetic pull from two opposite directions started - one by Christianity and the other by Hinduism. The declaration of the Hindu religion that tribal pagan religions are a crude form of Hinduism made its ambit wider and portrays its spirit of acceptability. The vast majority of the tribe who are not Christians are now worshipping their own pagan gods and at the same time venerating the Hindu gods and goddesses as well. Many have now made prayer rooms or construct a small temple in their open lawn for following the Hindu rituals of worship. Their women have started putting the vermillion or 'Sindoor' in their forehead which is a practice of the Hindus. Formerly, to the Karbis this practice was a taboo. The saying, "*Duk Sang aso, nok-ang chehi kertang*," meaning, "We are the off springs where our girls maintain pure and chaste lives by the process of tattooing on the face, hence one should desist the use of sindoor and it is forbidden."

79. Opcit, An interview with Samsing Teron. Samsing Teron many times used to tell this incident to the children and youth in the school which he founded.

The process of 'Duk Kacheduk' or tattooing where a perpendicular line on the face of young unmarried girls has a painful history. No one can say with accuracy as to which group of people had unleashed the atrocity on the Karbis. Some say that it was the Kacharis while another version points to the Burmese.[80] As per their account, the Karbi girls who are by nature fair and good looking fell victims to outsiders who used to carry them away. It is not certain whether the young girls are kidnapped for the purpose of marriage or adultery or for conducting occult practices particularly human sacrifice. When an inter-marital relationship takes place between two groups it is done in a cordial friendly way and not through kidnapping. Their accounts also did not mention the birth of a new group of people through off springs produced from the kidnapped Karbi girls nor do their accounts mention about the kidnapped girls coming back to their parents or residing in a known region. The fact is that once kidnapped, they were not to be found anywhere. Temple prostitution and human sacrifice to appease goddess and spirits were common in the country and North-East India too is not free from these menaces. The worship of the Shakti cult of the Hindu pantheon requires human blood and Shakti Sthals like Kamakhya near Gauhati, Nartiang in Jaintia hills of Meghalaya and others were once Centre where human beings were sacrificed. The Yajur Veda mentions that "For the performance of a Purushumedha Yajna (Human sacrifice) along with other articles a Kirata is necessary.[81] The Kiratas are none other than the Mongolians of North-East India to which the Karbis undoubtedly belonged. It was the human sacrifice issue that led the British declares war against the Jaintias of Meghalaya. Karbi girls probably fell victim to this menace and were saved only after following the practice of 'Duk Kacheduk'. The process is painful but a young Karbi girl had to undergo it. A thorn from the cane plant ('Pri' in Karbi) and the juice of the indigo leaves ('Sibu arvo') are used. The thorn is pricked on the soft flesh of the face and the indigo juice is applied on it leaving a permanent mark. At one time a young girl without the tattooed mark on her face cannot even serve drinking water to the guest and elders. A girl without the mark was considered defiled of her chastity by out siders.

Instead of trying to win over these people, the plain people treat them as untouchables ranking them to the lowest position of their caste system. Comments like "Mikir Okora, Naga letera" and calling the Karbis as 'monkeys' for wearing the loin cloth and constructing a hut on top of tree speak enough volume on this. The Ahom Buranji, 1875 shows a shallow understanding of the writer in understanding the Karbis, *"Mikeer Jati bortoman Nagaon, Naga hills jila aru Khasiya porbot jilar majhor parboitya thait ei hanto prokritir jati bah kor.*

80. Tanmoy Bhattacharjee, '***Sociology of the Karbis***' P - 37.
81. B.M Das, '***The people of Assam***' P - 2.

Homobhumitu onek Mikeer ase. Ihote amar manuhe hoite borkoi milibo pare. Mikeer bilakok amar manuhe 'dalor Mikeer' bule. Hihote sneh ba onugrohor a hate heirup bul……..''[82] (The Mikirs, these peace loving people, live in the hilly regions between the Nagaon, Naga hill and Khasi hills district. Many Mikirs live in the plains too. These people can mix with our people very much. Mikirs are called, 'Mikirs living in the tree branches' by our people). *(When I was a boy, I used to accompany my mother for a visit to government officers residence. We are so much pained to know that a purification ritual was performed on the seats where we sat after our departure. This ritual is also applicable to other Karbis as well).* In an article found in the monthly newspaper 'Birta' there appeared an incident which is condemnable even to this day.[83] The Report in the paper goes like this. At a place called Horihojo (Horihojan?) While two or three men were taking their breakfast in the paddy field, after ploughing, a Karbi girl out of curiosity and trying to learn the art hold the plough and started ploughing for a few moments. Later, she was caught by a group of sixty people and a 'mel' (meeting) was conducted in order to take actions against her. The girl was held guilty and according to the Hindu law the people demanded that a yoke be put on her neck and she should be made to plough. The girl helplessly cried but the people insisted. At this time a Karbi teacher pointed how girls in America do different occupations and argued that taboo should not be the guiding factor in work culture. Women have become pilots, plough the field and assisted men in every possible ways. The girl in question was not even a Hindu but how she was brought under the ambit of Hindu law is something to be noted. Therefore, will the Karbis be comfortable with the Hindu religion. If they are converted to this faith will they still yield whose practitioners treat them as untouchables? Will it not affect their social practice and ways of life where freedom for both the sexes is an honoured culture? Will they be comfortable under the caste system where they will be placed in the lowest rank in the caste hierarchy? When Buddhism and Jainism which do not recognize caste sprang up, a large number of untouchables and lower rank Hindus converted to these new religions. When Omed and Ramke, the first Christian converts from the Garo tribe decided to become Christians their main conversation of not becoming Hindus was due to the caste system. Under these circumstances Christian missionaries took full advantage of the situation and introduced Christianity among the Karbis of North-East India.

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82. **Ahom Buranji**, Reprinted by Asom Prakashan Parishad, 3rd Edition, 2003
83. Birta' Karbi newspaper published by the American Baptist missionaries. Somewhere in 1904-05 or 1937. The above incident appeared in the issue of April, 1949.

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