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# A Missiological Reflection on the Anglican Church in North-East India from 1845 to 1970

ERNEST W. TALIBUDDIN\*

## I

The question may arise that why an article, exclusively, of this kind when the Anglican Church as a historical reality, since 29th November, 1970, no more exists in India? According to Earl E. Cairns, the history of Christianity is "the interpreted record of the origin, progress and impact of Christianity upon human society..."<sup>1</sup> The history of the Anglican Church in India covers a period of almost three centuries. As far as, the North-Eastern region of India is concerned, the Anglican Church has a history of one-hundred and twenty-five years.

Moreover, the Anglican Church — as in the case of the Church of South India in 1946 — was one of those six Church traditions, ventured out to unite in 1970 and made the CNI a reality. Thus, in other words, the Anglican Church can also be considered as one of the 'roots' of the Church of North India. Secondly, the membership of the Diocese of North-East India both at the time of the inauguration of the CNI and to this day is almost hundred per cent of those who have Anglican background.

Thus, how far can it be justified to ignore or by-pass or even side-line a Church tradition within a short period not even of three decades which has a long history to its credit and is like a 'root' in the soil? It is this question that has prompted to take up this task to examine, review and reflect missiologically the progress and impact the Anglican Church during its existence in India was able to make in its North-Eastern region

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\*Bishop Ernest W. Talibuddin is Lecturer and Chaplain of Serampore College. This article is a study and research during his episcopal ministry (1986-96) in North-East India.

as a whole and how much that has been effective in its relation to the total Church in India as well as the 'life' and 'mission' of the Church in terms of other Church traditions within North-East India?

## II

The Church historians and theologians may say anything adverse or in favour to justify the out-come of the sixteenth century so called 'Reformation'. But, one tragic impact that has left its mark so deep on the 'life' and 'mission' of the Church is the division in the form of innumerable church denominations. Interestingly, each of them claims to be 'reformed' because "purged... of everything not expressly allowed in the Bible"<sup>2</sup> and therefore is genuine.

The Anglican Church is also one of them, born out of the so called 'reforming' process; but much different from other denominations, also claims to be 'Reformed'. But, proclaims to be 'Catholic', too.<sup>3</sup> Its members declare in the Creeds their belief in the Holy Catholic Church, ...in the Bidding Prayer the congregation are exhorted 'to pray for Christ's Holy Catholic Church'.<sup>4</sup> Because, "In Bishop Jewel's words, to 'have returned to the apostles and old Catholic fathers' "<sup>5</sup> According to Bishop Cyril Garbett, "while our Church is Catholic it is also Protestant...".<sup>6</sup> Because, "...in the value it attaches to spiritual freedom...".<sup>7</sup> Whereas, there are many in communion with the Church of England who disclaim that title.<sup>8</sup> H.A.L. Fisher explains the Anglican Church as, "Erastian in government, Roman in ritual, Calvinist in theology"<sup>9</sup>

There is another, rather, more important reason which places the Church of England, exclusively, on a distinctive level than any of the so called 'reformed' churches. After having been almost a thousand years directly under the jurisdiction of Rome, during the time of 'Reformation' it also severed its ancient alligence. Subsequently, by an Act of State 'the Power of the Pope ceased to be recognised in England'<sup>10</sup> Instead, all the ecclesiastical powers were entrusted to be exercised by the Monarch of England and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Thus, the 'Church in England' became the 'Church of England'.

In order to clarify the relation between the Church and the State, Elizabeth I (1558) claimed to herself only the title 'Supreme Governor'. Thus, Bicknell asserts, "The Church of England 'as by law established' in the original use of phrase (Ref. Cannons of 1604) means 'not as by law founded, but as by law settled, it refers not to the origin of the Church, but to its control.'<sup>11</sup> Hence, Bicknell also states that "Establishment is in its nature a political fact: the adoption or maintenance of a natural relationship towards the Church. The Church cannot either establish or disestablish herself."<sup>12</sup> Whereas, the other Protestant churches faced with a crucial question regarding the relationship of the Church to the State, specially in the matter of Church polity. The Independents in England did not favour any kind of State authority over Church and religious matters.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, "The real issue... was on the question of the type of church which should take the place of the old Church..."<sup>14</sup> Because of "... a bitter and irreconcilable battle between two mutually exclusive concepts of the Church."<sup>15</sup>

### III

Thus, as a matter of fact, the pertinent question that has to be looked into is that as to how a Church with 'Establishment' as a political fact in its nature can justify its role of missionary work in the evangelization of India in general and its North-Eastern region in particular?

The Reformers of the sixteenth century were not concerned for overseas mission. As a matter of fact, they "assumed the Great Commission had been fulfilled by the apostles".<sup>16</sup> After the apostles, says Luther, "no one has any longer such a universal apostolic command, but each Bishop or Pastor has his appointed diocese as parish".<sup>17</sup> According to Alister MccGrath, "Though the Church exists as being the bearer and proclaimer of the Good News of Jesus Christ, in the West because of monolithically Christian culture, there seemed to be little point or need in proclaiming the gospel."<sup>18</sup> Whereas, in the considered opinion of Stephen Neill, "in many cases the Protestant churches as such were unable or unwilling themselves to take up the cause of missions. This was left to

the voluntary societies, dependent on the initiative of consecrated individuals, and relying for financial support on the voluntary gifts of interested Christians."<sup>19</sup>

Nonetheless, the fact that should not be ignored is that it was only due to Spiritual Revivals during the later part of the seventeenth century and a good part of the eighteenth century, through few movements — such as: Pietistic Movement, almost simultaneously started in Holland, Germany and Switzerland and derived its name from religious gatherings called the 'Collegia Pietatis'.<sup>20</sup> In England, it was the Evangelical Revival or Evangelical Awakening to the Church of England as the former was to the Lutheran Church.<sup>21</sup> It played a significant role in the transformation of both the 'religion' and the 'society' in England. It gave an important stimulus to the Reformation tradition; as a result the Church of England became sensitive to its missionary obligation.

The nineteenth century saw the so called Modern Missionary Movement, is considered the greatest result of the Spiritual Revival. William Carey with whom, it is said, it began was the product of the Evangelical Awakening.<sup>22</sup> During the same century, England had another movement, known as Oxford Movement or Tractarian Movement, because a series of tracts were used to express its views.<sup>23</sup> Alister MacGrath says that 'both the sixteenth century Reformation and the nineteenth century Oxford Movement represented a systematic attempt to return to the vision of the New Testament or apostolic church'.<sup>24</sup>

In England there was one group which took mainly the principles from the Protestant reformers of the Continent, first from Luther and then from Calvin. The members of this group had only one way to purify Christian religion, and to bring it into conformity with the scripture, was to destroy Catholicism and instead, to create a new Protestant Church in its place. In order to achieve the goals they wanted to abolish episcopacy, to turn the Eucharist into just a memorial, with no sacrifice and no Presence in it, to get rid of all vestments, all reverent ceremonies including kneeling to receive the Sacrament. They just wanted to make preaching sermons almost everything in Worship, and Sacraments almost nothing.<sup>25</sup> Whereas, the

central principal of the English Reformation was to go right back to the New Testament and the early Church, and from these sources to learn what a true and pure Catholicism is.<sup>26</sup> In other words, the Church of England wanted to present to the world a free, Evangelical, and Scriptural Catholicism.<sup>27</sup> William Chillingworth, an Anglican apologist of the seventeenth century wrote the famous words: "*The Bible, I say, the Bible only is the religion of Protestants*".<sup>28</sup>

Like other reformed churches, the Church of England also faced the problem of church polity. The above-mentioned group opposed church government by bishops. Whereas, some favoured the Presbyterian form and others desired to have like the Congregationalists.<sup>29</sup> Thus, inspite of the fact that the Church of England due to Evangelical Revival had become sensitive to its missionary obligations, the question still remained as to how it would accomplish its responsibility?

#### IV

The discovery of the route to India via Cape of Good Hope by Vasco De Gama in 1498 was already well known. The Netherland's United East India Company, purely for commercial purpose was founded in 1602 and chartered by the Dutch Government. The British also conducted initial exploration mainly for commercial venture. But, there was no missionary spirit at that time alive in England. That is why John William Kaye says:

"The conversion of the moors or the Gentoos was assuredly no part of their design... Protestantism... was only striking root in our own soil; the time has not yet come for it to put forth its branches to spread over the remote places on earth."<sup>30</sup>

Stephen Neill says, "it is only when the Dutch and the English begin to push their commercial ventures to the ends of the earth that Protestantism begins to breathe a freer missionary air."<sup>31</sup> However, the expansion and the growth of the Church (Protestant) in general and the Anglican Church in particular, at the initial stage, could be subscribed to three main factors: The 'Trade', the 'Colonisation' and the 'Missionary Societies.'

The expansion of the Anglican Church beyond the shores of England, Sir John Seeley describes, "In its early stages was not prompted by missionary zeal. Early in the seventeenth century English people began to settle abroad as traders on the continent of Europe and in India."<sup>32</sup>

The East India Company received its charter from Queen Elizabeth I on the last day of the year 1600.<sup>33</sup> When in 1613, London Company of Merchants sent a small group of men to trade on Indian soil in Surat, among the workers there was a Chaplain, also.<sup>34</sup> Some of these Chaplains, such as Joseph Salbank<sup>35</sup> and Patrick Copeland<sup>36</sup> were very much imbued with missionary zeal. Finally, this Company in 1708 joined with another English Company and became "the United Company of Merchants of England trading with the East Indies" or 'British East India Company.'<sup>37</sup> The Company did its best to provide religious ministrations for its workers in India and beyond.<sup>38</sup> These Chaplains under Company's firm orders were expected to learn the local language, so that they might better make known to the Indian the truth of the Christian Faith.<sup>39</sup> Initially, almost all of them were in regular Anglican Orders. Thus, "the Anglican Church in India" as M.E. Gibbs says, "began as a spiritual provision for the Englishmen having business there."<sup>40</sup>

## V

In reality, however, Anglicanism was established by colonization. Stephen Neill writes, "Exploration was followed, or accompanied, by exploitation. The white man still came to trade but he nearly always stayed to rule."<sup>41</sup> Jacob S. Dharmaraj laments that colonization represented "the close knit strength of colonial mission structure and its intimate ties to the socio-economic, political and cultural institutions that dominated nineteenth century India."<sup>42</sup>

In 1661, the Portuguese ceded the island of Bombay (now Mumbai) to the English which then became their first territory in India. This later was transferred to the East India Company.<sup>43</sup>

For more than 250 years English influence in India was exercised through the trading company. In fact, the very

presence of the English in this country was only as traders. But, now because of the commercial rivalry at home the struggle for supremacy between English and French began both in India and America. Finally, the battle of Plassey (1757) followed by a couple of other encounters settled the question of English supremacy in India.<sup>44</sup> But, neither the Christians in England realised their responsibility to India nor the Company, as a policy, was willing to initiate any missionary activity as it might disturb the Indians and that would ultimately hinder the trade.<sup>45</sup>

## VI

Though the Church of England was brought outside of England by early explorers, traders and colonists, but it was the Missionary Societies that assisted in real missionary enterprise during the eighteenth century, such as: the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) the society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG),<sup>46</sup> had its official backing of the Church of England and was incorporated by the Royal Charter. Its main aim was to provide Anglican ministrations to British people abroad, and to evangelize the non-Christians.<sup>47</sup> The Church Missionary Society was founded by the 'evangelical' sixteen clergy and nine laity.<sup>48</sup>

With the arrival of Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Henrey Plutschau as missionaries from Denmark on July 9, 1706, not only they became the pioneers of the Royal Danish Mission, but also laid the foundation for the future Christian (Protestant) missions in India.<sup>49</sup> Their achievements in India also inspired the Christians in England. So much so that SPCK gifted him the press which was set to print the Tamil New Testament.<sup>50</sup> This, later, led to the establishment of 'English Missions' in several places in South India by SPCK. However, initially, the mission work was with the support of the German Lutheran missionaries, the most famous among those was Friedrich Schwartz.<sup>51</sup>

In spite of rigorous opposition from the directors of the Company and their supporters, evangelical social reformer William Wilberforce in 1793 in the English Parliament proposed that the Company should be responsible for promoting



the spiritual welfare of its Indian subjects.<sup>52</sup> From 1806 to 1810, regularly, missionary responsibility of England for India was advocated in the SPG Anniversary sermons. In this context, one of the recommendations made was to introduce Anglican bishopric,<sup>53</sup> which according to the Charter of 1813 an 'Ecclesiastical Establishment' was set up and subsequently a provision for a Bishop of Calcutta was made.<sup>54</sup> Thomas Fanshawe Middleton became the first Anglican Bishop in India (1814-1822). Thus, this marked the opening of the second stage of the Anglican Church's life in India. But, the authority of the Bishop of Calcutta was to be exercised 'according to the Ecclesiastical Laws of the Realm of England'.<sup>55</sup>

On the other hand, the Company also openly 'was suspicious of missionaries and hostile to their entrance into its territory because of the fear that the disturbance caused by the preaching of the Gospel might threaten their dominions'.<sup>56</sup> Even though according to the East India Act of 1858 the power of the government of India was transferred to the British Crown,<sup>57</sup> the principle of 'non-interference' was maintained. Of course, there were some who interpreted it as unfavourable to Christian witness.<sup>58</sup> Thus, it was evident that though, to certain extent, the establishment of the Anglican Church in India was due to the initiative and efforts of the Evangelicals, it was not so easy for the Bishop of Calcutta to be an Evangelical.<sup>59</sup>

Of course, Bishop Daniel Wilson (1832-47), the Fifth Bishop of Calcutta and First Metropolitan of India, was an exception. He was a stiff Evangelical. His "anti-caste feelings seem to have been shaped by the Evangelical pressure group with which he was associated."<sup>60</sup> In order to put it into practice, he through his letter dated 17th January, 1834 issued a five points policy known as 'Wilson Line' after his name, which not only 'diverge sharply from the tradition of toleration but also from the Government line of non-interference with social and religious customs'.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, "boundary-crossing was now made a condition for baptism."<sup>62</sup>

## VII

It seems as though what has been narrated so far is a lengthy introduction to our main subject : *'A Missiological Reflection on*

*the Anglican Church in North-East India from 1845 to 1970*. But, it is better to have some historical background knowledge of the Anglican Church before we step into an area which until 1826, politically, was under the King of Burma (now Myanmar) and was alienated from the main stream of Indian politics. It was on February 24, 1826 the 'Treaty of Yandabu' was signed, whereby the King of Burma agreed to renounce all claims upon Assam (Greater Assam: covering almost whole of North East India) in favour of East India Company.<sup>63</sup> In 1874, Assam was created as a Province, covering the North-Eastern Frontier of India comprising the valleys of Brahmaputra and Barak.

Anglican Church in North-Eastern region of India, of course, is the extension of the Anglican Diocese of Calcutta until in 1915. It was separated as, then, the Diocese of Assam. Its jurisdiction, then, covered 'southern apex being at Cox Bazar, below Chittagong, where India touches Myanmar, western side the Garo Hills, on the eastern side Sadya, Patkoi Hills, south east through the Naga and Lushai (now Mizo) hills.<sup>64</sup> Of course, in the north it is the Himalayas'. Ethnologically, a large part of the native population is made of tribal peoples both of the hills and plains, mainly of the Tibeto-Mongoloid stock.

In North-East, also, the Government maintained the policy of 'non-interference'. Even after the 'Treaty of Yandabu', the British government was not keen to support any missionary enterprise. The earliest record of the Ecclesiastical Ministration under the Government notification was in 1839.<sup>65</sup>

As far as, the Anglican Church in North East region is concerned, even after the establishment of an Anglican Episcopate in 1813, time to time, only provided ministration to the Europeans scattered all over on the various tea plantations, and also in the service of the Government, the railways and other commercial undertakings.<sup>66</sup> Revd. A Garstin, Chaplain of Sylhet was the first Anglican clergyman who visited Assam in 1841.<sup>67</sup>

Though during the sixteenth century in England the monasteries were dissolved and no religious community was known for almost next three centuries. But, their revival was due to the second generation of the Oxford Movement, such

as: Society of Saint John the Evangelist (SSJE), 1866; Sisters of All Saints' Community, 1878; Cambridge Brotherhood (now Brotherhood of the Ascended Christ), Delhi; Oxford Mission, Calcutta; Oxford Sisters Indian Community; Saint Stephen's Community, Delhi; the Brotherhood of Saint Andrew's (1912), Haluaghat in Bangladesh; and Dublin Mission, Hazari Bagh. Thus, the missionary task in North East India was, also, left with the SPG.

### VIII

The Act of 1813 led to the entrance of the SPG into the Indian field.<sup>68</sup> However, it was only by 1818 that the Society undertook work in India, commencing with Bengal.<sup>69</sup> Though, providing ministrations to the Europeans in India was not the responsibility of the Society, however, its evangelistic work from 1825 down to the recent time has been very much appreciated.<sup>70</sup>

It was during Bishop Daniel Wilson's time that in 1842 Robert Bland was sent to Guwahati,<sup>71</sup> as a Government Chaplain but his real designation was "Chaplain of Assam". He toured extensively in Assam to visit scattered congregations. It was in his time, the new Church building at Guwahati was consecrated as Christ Church.<sup>72</sup> The record book of the Christ Church, Guwahati corroborates this. It states: "AD 1844 May 9, *I, Robert Bland, Minister of Christ reached this station of Guwahati by the mercy of God having escaped fever and accidents, I brought with me a young man named Roach from Dacca to act as a clerk*",<sup>73</sup>

So the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel extended its mission field at Dibrugarh in 1851 with the main object to convert the hill tribes around.<sup>74</sup> It had full blessings of Bishop Wilson, who happened to be a zealous evangelical. By 1888 over thousand Christians were known to exist from among those coolie immigrants from Chhotanagpur.<sup>75</sup> Due attention was also given to the Assamese as well as Kacharis. In 1861, Robert Bland appealed to the Society to adopt a Mission at Tezpur which originally was designed for the hill tribes of north Assam. On May 16, 1847 George Edward Lynch Cotton, sixth Bishop of Calcutta laid the foundation stone of the Church

of the Epiphany, Bishop Cotton was very eager to open up Assam and so he ordained a German Lutheran Minister, Revd. C. Hesselmayer, who became SPG missionary. Later, the mission centre were opened in Mikir (Karbi) and Cachar for Kol (Hindi speaking) Tea Gardens coolies from Chhotanagpur.

In January, 1870 Revd. H. Hindle became the first Chaplain of Shillong with additional responsibility of Cherrapunji, Cachar and Sylhet.<sup>76</sup> In 1866, when Bishop Cotton visited Shillong and Serampore after having visited Cachar, Sylhet and Cherrapunji, he expressed his desire to start a school for the 44th Native Regiment.<sup>77</sup> Later, the foundation stone of the church building (All Saints' Church) was laid by H.E. Northbrook, then, the Viceroy of India on August 22, 1874.<sup>78</sup> In March, 1881 a school for the benefit of the Anglo-Indian children of the Province was also opened at Shillong.<sup>79</sup> As far as Garo Hills are concerned, it was only at the beginning of this century, the Anglican Mission to a certain extent was properly made. Initially, it was Father Edmund Shore of Oxford Mission, an Anglican Religious Community, who in pursuit of his duties as Chaplain of Dacca also visited Mymensingh and made contact with a group of Garo converts. He made his first visit to their centre at Haluaghat in the extreme north of the district near Garo Hills in 1907.<sup>80</sup>

It was in February, 1864 the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel sent Sydney Endle to Tezpur to assist Revd. C.H. Hesselmayer, then, in-charge of the Kachari Mission.<sup>81</sup> While describing the Kacharis (Boros), Endle writes, "the area dealt with lies mainly in the part of the country known as the 'Kachari Duars'... the mass of the population belong to an aboriginal race known to us as the 'Kachari'<sup>82</sup>, who are in many ways quite distinct from their Hindu and Mussalman neighbours. With much less quickness of apprehension than the latter, they have certain simple primitive virtues of great price - truthfulness, honesty and straight-forwardness - nor universally characteristic of oriental life, and there is good reason to hope that the great mass of this interesting race sooner or later be drawn within the fold of the Good Shepherd."<sup>83</sup>

Out of thirty years of his ministry in North-East, almost twenty-five years, Revd. Sydney Endle served in this area which predominantly still is inhabited by the Kacharis, presently, known as Boros. Because of his tireless and committed ministry Endle was called 'A Veteran Missionary'. In 1885, he published a grammar of the Kachari (Boro) language, because he knew more of the structure of the language than the Kacharis themselves.<sup>84</sup>

## IX

From a missionary point of view, Assam is closely connected with Chhotanagpur. In 1823, tea was discovered in India with its first Tea Estate in Chabua in Assam.<sup>85</sup> Because of this a large number of coolie immigrants from Chhotanagpur, Orissa and Santal Pargana in West Bengal were employed on the tea Plantation in Assam. According to 1888 statistics, over a thousand were already Christians.<sup>86</sup> As early as 1866 some converts of German Lutheran Mission in Chotanagpur were also commended to the care of the Anglican clergy in Assam. Thus, such development obviously increased the work.<sup>87</sup>

A scheme to have a separate Bishopric for Assam was under consideration. Though, there was a large population and scattered communities of English Churchmen, there were only six places where the Anglican clergy were posted. Since 1851, during almost fifty years, only twelve times the area had Episcopal visitations.<sup>88</sup> Thus, in 1915 the new diocese was created and on the Feast of Epiphany, 1915 Revd Herbet Pakenham Walsh was consecrated in Saint Paul's Cathedral, Calcutta.<sup>89</sup> Same year, on the 8th April, he was enthroned as the first Anglican Bishop in Assam with his Headquarters at Dibrugarh. He resigned in 1923.

George Clay Hubback (1915-24), though he was the second Anglican Bishop in Assam but technically he became the First Bishop of Assam as well as the 'first as a member of a Religious Order to act as a Bishop in the Province.'<sup>90</sup> He sought the support for three Chaplains in order to provide Church's ministry to them. Secondly, with SPG support he was able to develop the Chabua Mission work which later became St. Luke's Hospital. Lastly, his most important contribution was

to make provision of a native ministry.<sup>91</sup> Nirod Kumar Biswas (1946-48), the third Bishop of Assam and the first Indian to hold episcopal responsibility of North-Eastern of India, emphasized on 'Evangelism' and 'Indigenization'. It was during his time that the government of India finally decided that the 'Indian Ecclesiastical establishment' should cease with effect from March 31, 1948.

"The Establishment... has its origin in the 17th century, when the Old East India Company's Chaplains took charge of the spiritual welfare of its agents and English settlers. In 1698, a Charter granted to the East India Company made it obligatory to provide spiritual privileges for the Company's servants. In 1813, another Charter led to the setting up of a full Ecclesiastical organization..."

"In 1858, the Government of British India passed directly to the Crown, the responsibility of Ecclesiastical Establishment devolved on the State. From that time the Government of India has provided for the maintenance of Chaplains for the English congregations, and has paid block grants to the dioceses, from which have come the major part of Bishops maintained by the Government..."<sup>92</sup>

Joseph Amritanand (1949-62) was the fourth Anglican Bishop of Assam. During his time, in 1954 came the disaster when the river Brahmaputra erosion caused the complete loss of the Diocesan Headquarters as well as Saint Paul's Church at Dibrugarh. Subsequently, the Diocesan Headquarters had to be shifted to Shillong. He also initiated the missionary efforts among the Garo Hills, the Mikir (Karbi) Hills, the Santals and the Punjabi Municipal workers at Shillong. Eric Samuel Nasir (1962-68), the fifth Anglican Bishop of Assam. In 1970, he became the first Moderator of the Church of North India and also the Bishop of Delhi. Ariel Victor Jonathan (1968-70) was the sixth and the last Anglican Bishop of Assam.

## X

So, the detailed historical account of the establishment and expansion of the Anglican Church in India in general and its extension in North-East India in particular could be summarised as 'to provide the Chaplaincy to those English

personnel as well as Anglo-Indians serving either in Trade, Civil Service or the Military. Because of its nature as being the 'Church of the Establishment', even, when the Anglican Bishopric of Calcutta was established by an Act of Parliament in 1813, its Bishop and his successors were subject and subordinate to the Archbishop of the Province of Canterbury.<sup>93</sup> It was only in 1930, after the enactment of the Indian Church Measure, 1927 and the Indian Church Act, 1927, then, the Episcopal Synod of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon dissolved the legal connection with the Church of England.<sup>94</sup>

Though, first East India Company and later the British government did claim to have a policy of 'Non-interference', but in reality colonial mission and the government were hand in glove. That is why, Harry Verrier Holman Elwin (commonly known as Verrier Elwin), even after dissolution of the legal connection of the Anglican Church in India with the Church of England, once said that "the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon, though nominally free, is still virtually under the control of a foreign government."<sup>95</sup> He further said, "Between this state religion and the religion of the New Testament I can trace no connexion."<sup>96</sup>

## XI

It will not be out of context to mention briefly three Anglicans who came to India, early this century, left no stone unturned to understand it. In their own respective way, in all sincerity, they served its people, made this country as their home and finally their remains were mingled with the soil of this great land. Today, they are recognized and remembered more outside the institutional church. Even though, two of them came here as recognized Anglican missionaries. It was in 1904, Charles Freer Andrews, later "known to India as Christ's Faithful Apostle and as Deenabandhu", an Englishman arrived in Delhi. He, as an Anglican missionary, was admitted to the Cambridge Brotherhood, now known as 'the Brotherhood of the Ascended Christ', to teach English at Saint Stephen's College.<sup>97</sup> Same year, Samuel Stokes from America, also an Anglican missionary, arrived in India. He was lauded by Gandhi and

other nationalist leaders as a 'model missionary'<sup>98</sup>. Bishop Lefroy described him as one of 'the most Christ-like men' he had ever known.<sup>99</sup> Verrier Elwin, an Anglican from England, landed in India in 1927 to work in Christa Seva Sangha at Pune. He later earned the title 'Din-Sevak', which means servant of the poor.

But, three of them in one way or other left the institutional church - in this case, the Anglican Church. As a matter of fact, Samuel Stokes later embraced Hinduism.<sup>100</sup> So also, after his return from South Africa in 1914, C.F. Andrews felt that "he could no longer continue to exercise his ministry within the boundaries of the Church in which he had been ordained as a priest. he felt that the time had come to 'take the world as his parish' "<sup>101</sup> Likewise, Verrier Elwin, in November, 1935, wrote to the Metropolitan, "I am... no longer a member of the Church of England either as a priest or a communicant."<sup>102</sup>

But why? It is a missiological question. It is very important as India is a religiously pluralistic society. Once Vinoba Bhave, the Sarvodaya leader said, "It is probable that no other religion has ever laid such emphasis on non-violence as has Christianity. It teaches love and non-violence in the clearest terms. Christians read the Bible, and profess the name of Jesus Christ, and at the same time they increase their armaments. How are these two things to be reconciled?"<sup>103</sup>

Stokes, passionately, believed that 'missionaries must make reparation for the sins of Western Imperialism'. Verrier Elwin, also, came to India with an idea of reparation in his mind.<sup>104</sup> Whereas, Andrews "longed simply to show forth Christ by allowing his own life to be taken over and moulded by him, and above all to demonstrate the personal presence of Christ by his care and concern for the poor, the humble and the out-cast".<sup>105</sup> This, of course, led him to face and accept the consequences which sometimes included shouts of 'Traitor'.<sup>106</sup> In other words, it was, both, a new missiological understanding of Christian faith and its praxis in a religiously pluralistic context.

## XII

Nevertheless, the Anglican missionary societies, such as: SPG, keeping in view some of the constraints and limitations



on the part of the Anglican Church, due to its status of being the 'Church of the Establishment', took initiative and joined hands with other Church traditions for the sake of evangelization, such as the Lutherans. Of course, this could, also, be considered as an ecumenical enterprise in common obligation of evangelization on part of the Anglican Church in India.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, 'Comity' became an accepted policy of Missionary work around the world.<sup>107</sup> Thus, while discussing the question of a limited area — that is, Brahmaputra, Burma and Barak Valleys in present Assam and part of Khasi-Jaintia Hills as well as Garo Hills in Meghalaya — as the concentration of the main function of the Anglican Church in North East India, the understanding of 'Comity' cannot be ignored. So also, the aim of the missionary society (SPG), to certain extent, was to provide Anglican ministration to British people abroad, and to evangelize the non-Christians. But for obvious reason, the Society, it appears, as though functioned only in areas of British settlements. Therefore, in case of North East India it happens to be Assam because of Tea industry and Shillong, later becoming the Capital of, then, Assam and few more places in that area. This is exactly what M.E. Gibbs said, "the Anglican Church in India began as a spiritual provision for the Englishmen having business there." This policy, probably, remained throughout its existence in India.

However, in case of North East India, at least for one group to a large extent it can be claimed that the Anglican Church has been able to succeed in inculturating the Gospel into the culture and tradition of the Adivasi immigrants from Chhotanagpur, Orissa and Santhal Pargana areas. As has been pointed out earlier, since the main ecclesiastical function of the Anglican Church was in Brahmaputra, Barak and Burma Valleys, the areas where the main Tea industry exists, it was naturally easy for the Anglican missionary society to work among these immigrants who were working in the Tea industry as coolies.

Whereas, to a large extent, there has been some failure in this direction on the part of the Anglican missionary enterprise, as far as the tribals in the Khasi, Jintia and Garo Hills are

concerned. But, much greater surprise is almost a total failure in regard to original Assamese being converted to Christian faith.

It is a fact that Anglican Church has been a pioneer in the field of ecumenism. It was in 1870 when the 'Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral' set out four points as a basis for Christian unity. "It took exactly a period of one-hundred years, from the time the General convention in 1888 accepted in substance the 'Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral' and the last Lambeth Conference in 1988 to express its joy and satisfaction on 'the work of the international ecumenical dialogues with Roman Catholics (ARCIC), Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Lutheran and Reformed Churches'"<sup>108</sup>

But, one great disappointment is that it seems as though nothing much is done between the Anglican Church and other Church traditions in North East India as far as the ecumenical relationship is concerned.

### XIII

Lastly, it is a great tragedy that in almost all the cases the Church History of India, so far, has been written under Western as well as denominational influence. Whereas, the History of Christianity is an open subject. In other words, it should not be a monopoly of any particular Church denomination. Instead, at this point of the turn of the century, in the interest of the Church as a whole in India, it would be appropriate if there is a shift of emphasis from 'Church History' to the 'History of Christianity'.

Therefore, what has been narrated in this presentation, mainly, is a study and research of the Anglican Church and its missionary activities in regard to 'Evangelization', with special reference to North East India, which to my understanding makes a part of mission history of Christianity in India.

*(Note: Most of the material in this presentation has been taken from the document (so far not printed) based on my study and research under the title: 'the Anglican Church and Evangelization' Shillong, 1997).*

**Notes:**

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3. cf. Cyril Garbett, *The Church of England Today*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953, pp. 13 ff.
4. *Ibid.*, p.13
5. *Ibid.*, p.14
6. *Ibid.*, p.14
7. *Ibid.*, p.14
8. cf. Gerald H. Anderson, ed., *The Theology of Christian Mission*, New York: Abingdon Press, 1961, p.3
9. F. Hrangkhuma, *op.cit.*, p.234.
10. William Boyd Carpenter, *A Popular History of the Church of England*, London: John Murray, 1908, p.169.
11. E. J. Bicknell, *A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine articles of the Church of England*, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1936, p.547.
12. *Ibid.*, p.547.
13. cf. F. Hrangkhuma, *op.cit.*, pp.299-300.
14. As quoted by Leonard Verduin, *The Reformers and their Step Children*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964, p.38,
15. *Ibid.*, p.38.
16. Gerald H. Anderson, *op.cit.*, p.98
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18. Alister McGrath, *The Renewal of Anglicanism*, London: SPCK, 1993, p.54.
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21. cf. Roger E. Hedlund, *Roots of the Great Debate in Mission*, Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1993, p.3
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25. cf. A.E. Simpson, *The Reformation*, London: SPCK, 1936, pp.50-51.
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27. cf. *Ibid.*, p.60.
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31. Stephen Neill, *op. cit.*, p.223.
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35. *Ibid.*, p.40.

36. Eyer Chatterton, *Our Anglican Church in India 1815-1946*, London: The Indian Church Aid Association, 1946, p.10.
37. *Ibid.*, pp.7-13.
38. Stephen Neill, *op. cit.*, p.232.
39. *Ibid.*, p.232.
40. M. E. Gibbs, *op. cit.*, pp.3-5.
41. Stephen Neill, *op. cit.*, p.47.
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43. M. E. Gibbs, *op. cit.*, pp.5-6.
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48. cf. Victor Koilpillai, *The SPCK in India 1710-1985*, Delhi: ISPCK, 1985, p.20.
49. cf. Stephen Neill, *op. cit.*, pp.228-231.
50. cf. *Ibid.*, p.231.
51. cf. C. B. Firth, *op. cit.*, p.137.
52. cf. *Ibid.*, p.142.
53. cf. C. f. Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the SPG 1701-1900*, London: Society's Office, 1901, p.472.
54. cf. *Ibid.*, pp.154-157.
55. cf. M. E. Gibbs, *op. cit.*, p.56
56. cf. Stephen Neill, *op. cit.*, p.262.
57. cf. M.E. Gibbs, *op. cit.*, p.205.
58. cf. Stephen Neill, *op. cit.*, p.356.
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60. Hoole, Charles, "An Anglican Approach to Church Growth: An Indian Example" in *Indian Church History Review*, Bangalore: CHAI, June, 1996, p.17.
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71. cf. S. B. Taylor. *op. cit.*, p.1.

72. C. F. Pascoe, *op. cit.*, p.605.
73. S. B. Taylor, *op. cit.*, p.1.
74. cf. C. F. Pascoe, *op. cit.*, p.607.
75. cf. *Ibid.*, p.607.
76. cf. S. B. Taylor, *op. cit.*, p.3.
77. cf. *Ibid.*, p.5.
78. cf. *Ibid.*, p.8.
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