

Christian Missions: X. Some aspects of the work of American Missionaries in Jaffna District from 1827-1866.

ONE of the most noteworthy features of the American Ceylon Mission which began its work in this country in 1816¹ was that it showed the long-term advantages to be obtained both in education and in evangelism when a religious society concentrates on a small area of work with zeal and devotion. The period 1827-1866 was marked by several difficulties and disappointments for this mission but the manner in which they were met secured very fruitful results for both Church and Country in later years. The general state of the mission in this period can be judged from the statistical abstracts given later in this article.

At the beginning of this period the mission conducted its work in five chief centres: Vaddukoddai, Uduvil, Tellipallai, Pandeterippu and Manipay with a smaller mission station at Kayts in charge of a local evangelist. There were six missionaries working under the auspices of the mission with two Ceylonese preachers and fourteen other local assistants ministering to a general membership with ninety in communicant status and conducting seventy free vernacular schools.²

In the earlier period among the more serious difficulties of the missionaries was their inability to get an adequate number of workers from America. Besides preventing the establishment of the Printing Press which the missionaries had brought with them, restrictions had been placed by the Governor, Sir Edward Barnes, on further recruitments to the mission.³ As one of the missionaries in Ceylon wrote, the Governor was so averse to any increase of the number of Americans in Ceylon that after the Printer, Mr. James Garrett was ordered to leave the island an injunction was subsequently obtained from His Majesty's Secretary for the Colonies against any future additions to the Mission. This was in force for eleven years until after the arrival of a new governor, Sir Robert Wilmot Horton, by whose representation to the Home Government, the injunction was removed.⁴ Colonel Colebrooke and Mr. C. H.

1. *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, pp. 110-115.

2. *Missionary Register*, 1828, p. 123

3. *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, p. 114.

4. Winslow, Miron: A Memoir of Harriet W. Winslow combining a sketch of the Ceylon Mission [London, 1838] pp. 135-136, cp. figures given in the *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, p. 114.

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Cameron who were in the island about this time on their Commission of Enquiry had also visited the mission stations and having seen and admired the work of the missionaries had represented matters to the authorities in England to the same end. Among the earliest missionaries who came as a result of the new policy were Dr. Nathan Ward, M.D. in 1833 and the Revd. J. R. Eckard in 1834.⁵

What Sir Emerson Tennent called the ' first embryo of instruction ' was given by the American missionaries in a network of free vernacular schools of which in 1827, ten years after the mission started, there were seventy in the Jaffna District. A general view of the conditions in which the missionaries worked in 1838 is given by Miron Winslow in the following words :—

' The five stations of which the Mission was for many years composed were now occupied ; though at Manepy only bungalows of mud walls covered with leaves were then erected. The walls of the old house being entirely destroyed, a dwelling house was after sometime prepared by taking off a part of the old church. None of the churches except that of Tillipally, which was only covered with leaves and had a floor of earth, were as yet repaired ; but with all the other stations large bungalows composed of a slight roof on two rows of taller and two of shorter posts and a half wall of unburnt brick, were soon built for worship. The dilapidated houses at Oodooville and Pandeteripo as well as at Tillipally and Batticotta were gradually made comfortable dwelling places. Boarding schools containing in all eighty-seven children were in successful operation at the different stations except Manepy, where one was commenced at the beginning of 1822 ; and native free schools in most of the villages near each station. The whole number of these schools in 1821, was twenty-four, in which were one thousand, one hundred and forty-nine children ' .⁴

Tennent stated in 1850 that :

' the children of the Tamils are taught [in these free village schools] in their own tongue the simplest elements of knowledge, and the earliest processes of education ; to read from translations of the Christian scriptures, and to write their own language, first by tracing the letters upon the sand, and eventually by inscribing them with an iron style upon the prepared leaves of the Palmyrah palm. It will afford an idea of the extent and perseverance with which education has been pursued in these primitive institutions, that, in the free schools of the Americans alone, four thousand pupils of whom one-fourth are females, are daily receiving instruction ; and upwards of ninety thousand children have been taught

4. Winslow, Miron : A Memoir of Harriet W. Winslow combining a sketch of the Ceylon Mission [London, 1838] pp. 135-136, cp. figures given in the *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, p. 114.

5. Tennent, Sir J. E. : *Christianity in Ceylon* [London, 1850] pp. 144-145.

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in them since their commencement ; a proportion equal to one-half of the present population of the peninsula'.⁵

Further steps in the ladder of education were the establishment of boarding schools, elementary fee-levying English schools, and the secondary schooling provided at the girl's English boarding school at Uduvil and the Seminary for boys at Vaddukoddai. The girl's school at Uduvil was started on land where originally there was a Portuguese Church and the residence of a Franciscan Friar. It was described by Tennent in words which are true of the school premises even today—'a beautiful spot, embowered with trees, and all its grounds and gardens are kept in becoming order with the nicest care and attention'.⁶

Although for several years there had been a reluctance on the part of parents to send girls for education in these schools⁷ and for about eight years after the school was established the maximum number of girls between five and eleven years of age was only thirty, the school later grew in popularity. Even if one does not agree with Tennent's views on the state of Tamil society in his day, his remarks on the early problems of the missionaries who conducted the school are of interest :

'The first pupils of the American mission at Oodooville were enticed to come by presents of dress—by the prospect of reward at each stage of their progress—and by the promise of a dowry of five or six pounds in the event of their remaining in the institution, till married with the approval of their teachers. Yet even when allured by these encouragements, so strong was the prejudice against female instruction, that the parents who had yielded and allowed their daughters to attend were visited with reproaches for their folly, and the children themselves evinced a sense of shame and confusion when, for the first time, they engaged in the novelty of learning to read'.⁸

He pointed out, however, that on his visit to the school he found that it had grown much in popularity and that there were one hundred pupils ; and, further, out of sixty new applicants only seventeen could be selected for admission. He also stated that :

'the earliest inmates of the institution were of low-castes and poor ; whereas the pupils and candidates now are many of them of most respectable families ; and the daughters of persons of property and influence in the district'.⁹

5. Tennent, Sir J. E.: *Christianity in Ceylon* [London, 1850] pp. 144-145.

6. Tennent, p. 159 ; Winslow, pp. 119, 172.

7. *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, p. 113.

8. Tennent, pp. 156-157.

9. Tennent, pp. 160-161.

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Of the curriculum Tennent wrote that :

‘ along with a thorough knowledge of the scriptures and the principles of the Christian religion, it embraces all the ordinary branches of female education which are communicated both in Tamil and in English ; and combined with this intellectual culture, the girls are carefully trained conformably to the usages of their country in all the discipline and acquirements essential to economy and domestic enjoyments at home ’.¹⁰

One of the difficulties of the education of girls was reported as early as 1828 to be that of ‘ finding any employment for them, compatible with cultivation of mind or elevation of character : But such employments will be found ’.¹¹ Indeed those in charge of Uduvil girls’ school found even in those early days a way out of the difficulty ; as at least one missionary summed it up, the chief object of the school was that of ‘ furnishing suitable partners [in marriage] for the native preachers and other assistants in the mission ’.

At a time when so much is said about ‘ free ’ education it is good to know that in those early days the American mission went so far as to provide the pupils of Uduvil on their leaving school even a part of their dowry. As the school report of 1856 has it each pupil who needed it was given—

					£ s. d.
1 fine cloth valued at	..	..	..	..	4 0
2 coarse cloths at 1-6	..	..	..	..	3 0
1 coarse cloth 14 cubits	..	..	..	..	2 3
1 wedding jacket—fine	..	..	..	..	1 6
1 fine jacket of bleached cloth	..	..	..	..	9
4 ordinary wearing jackets	..	..	..	..	2 6
1 ordinary sized pillow	..	..	..	..	1 0
1 round pillow covered with print	..	..	..	..	2 0
3 pillow cases of country cloth	..	..	..	..	9
1 veil for wedding	..	..	..	..	2 0
comb, needles, thimble, bodkin	..	..	..	..	9
sewing cotton (thread)	..	..	..	..	3
1 patch work quilt	..	..	..	..	4 0
1 mat (sleeping)	..	..	..	..	9
1 brass plate	..	..	..	..	2 0
stationery valued at	..	..	..	..	1 0

It was however not the hope of getting this dowry that made parents continue to send their girls to Uduvil. The dowry from the school was discontinued from 1856. But even earlier their parents knew that the education

10. *M.R.*, 1828, p. 123.

11. Winslow, pp. 221-222.

their children received was dowry enough. In 1848 a special class had been started on the condition that no dowry would be given to its members at their marriage although only twenty-two could be selected owing to lack of accommodation. As many as seventy-five girls had applied for admission to this class. Then in 1852 the mission went a step further by asking boarding fees either wholly or in part from those able to pay and yet the school found no difficulty in getting the number of pupils desired. In 1855 there were seventy-three pupils in residence at Uduvil in six classes. Forty-three of these were children of Christian parents and twenty-one members of the Church. By its Jubilee year (1874) five hundred and thirty-two had been connected with the school since its inception.

At the time of its foundation Uduvil was in charge of the Revd. and Mrs. Miron Winslow who continued until 1833 when they left owing to ill-health and were succeeded by the Revd. and Mrs. Levi Spaulding who were in charge until 1840, after which, for the last portion of this period, Miss Eliza Agnew officiated as its virtual head.¹²

The chief educational centre of the mission was at Vaddukoddai where the Central English School had been established on July 22, 1823¹³ with thirty-six pupils selected from the boarding schools. From its foundation the Revd. Dr. Daniel Poor was Principal until 1836. As Dr. Poor knew Tamil, during his time special stress appears to have been laid on the study of the vernacular. In 1836, the Revd. H. R. Hoisington became Principal and continued till 1849 except during his absence due to ill-health from 1841-1844 when Dr. Ward who had joined the school as Professor of Medicine, Chemistry, and Geology acted for him. Other prominent Faculty members during the period under review were the Revd. Edward Cope who was Professor of English from 1840-47; the Revd. Robert Wyman, Professor of Sacred Literature and Biblical Interpretation from 1843 to 1845 when he died and was succeeded by the Revd. S. G. Whittlesey (1846-47). The Revd. Dr. E. P. Hastings served as Principal from 1849 and also for short periods in 1851, 1854 and 1855. In 1846 the school was called the Batticotta Seminary by which name it was popularly known for many years.¹⁴

12. Historical Sketch read at the Jubilee Meeting at Batticotta, May 24, 1866—Mss. Address to the Former Pupils of Batticotta Seminary and other schools of the American Mission—(Jaffna: Ripley and Strong, Printers, 1886). Historical Sketch read at the Jubilee meeting, May 24, 1866 (Mss. Records at Bishop's House, Vaddukoddai) p. 3 following; Minutes of the special meeting of the Ceylon Mission held in April and May 1855 on the occasion of the visit of the Deputation from the Prudential Committee of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Madras, Printed by J. Tulloch, American Mission Press, 1855) hereinafter called the *Anderson Report*, pp. 50 ff.

13. *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, pp. 112-113.

14. *Anderson Report*, pp. 57 ff.

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A special class was formed in 1840 for those who having completed the usual course at the Seminary wanted to continue higher studies for a period of three years. It became the nucleus of the Theological Department of the Seminary in 1843.

In 1843 the course of studies appears to have been as follows :

First Year

English Studies—Arithmetic, New Testament, Analytical Reader, Grammar, Child's Book on the Soul, Geography of Hindustan.

Tamil Studies—Grammar, etc.

Second Year

English Studies—Geography (Woodbridge), Grammar, Arithmetic, Analytical Reader, Good's Book of Nature.

Tamil Studies—Same continued, Blind Way, Evidence from Hinduism.

Third Year

English Studies—Algebra, Sequel to the Analytical Reader, Selections of Poetry, History, Book-keeping, Greek.

Tamil Studies—Nannool.

Fourth Year

English Studies—History, Euclid, Watt's on the Mind, Gallaudet's Natural Theology, Greek, Young or Pope's Poetry, Mundy's Evidences.

Tamil Studies—Nannool.

Fifth Year

English Studies—Mundy's Evidences, Theological Class book, Logarithms, Mathematics, Mensuration, Surveying, Navigation, Greek, History, Enfield's Philosophy.

Tamil Studies—Sanskrit, Kural.

Sixth Year

English Studies—Astronomy, Chemistry, Logic, Political Economy, Alexander's Evidences, Greek, Church History.

Tamil Studies—Sanskrit and Tamil works, Kural, etc., Hindu Astronomy.

Throughout the school the pupils had the reading of scriptures, Tamil and English literary works, Penmanship and Composition.

The three-year course of the Theological Department consisted of the following curriculum :—

First Year

Dwight's Theology, Geology, Church History, Biblical Antiquities, Hebrew.

Second and Third Years

Dwight's Theology, Abercrombe's Moral Feelings, Hebrew, Exposition of the Scriptures, Writing Sermons.

All the pupils in the school had not only their tuition free but also free board except a very few who were allowed to live outside and attend school as day pupils. Till 1840 all pupils were provided with books, stationery and clothing.

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After 1840 those who could afford it were asked to pay for board at the rate of 4s. 6d. per month, some were allowed to pay half and about one-fourth the pupils were educated completely free.

In 1845 the Seminary was reorganised in two departments (i) Normal and (ii) Academical each of which had a four-year course of studies. The curricula prepared for the two departments were as follows :

I. The Normal Department

<i>English</i>	<i>Tamil</i>
The English Bible	The Bible
Town's Analysis	The Indian Pilgrim
Analytical Reader	Rhenin's Evidences
Selections of Poetry	Body of Divinity
Geography of Hindustan	Church History
Grammar	Grammar
Parley's History	Tamil Classic Reader
Marshman's India	Elements of Hindu Astronomy
Gallaudet's Natural Theology	
Joyce's Arithmetic	
Thompson's Algebra	
Good's Book of Nature	
Introduction to Sciences	
Penmanship	
Book-keeping	

II. The Academical Department

<i>Religious and Literary</i>	<i>Scientific</i>
The Bible	Day's Algebra
Greek New Testament	Playfair's Euclid
Evidences of Religion	Day's Mathematics
Parley's Natural Theology	Conic Sections
Compendium of History	Olmstead's Natural Philosophy
Church History	Chemistry
Hodge's Logic	Natural History
Rhetoric	Astronomy, Eclipses, European and Hindu Astronomy Compared
Classical Tamil	Bacon's Novum Organum
Classical Sanskrit	Intellectual and Moral Philosophy
Mason on Self-knowledge	Construction of Maps, Charts, Plans, etc.
Keith on Prophecy	
Dwight's Theology	
Butter's Analogy	

During Dr. Hoisington's time, he took a great deal of interest in promoting the studies of the sciences and also of Tamil literature. He wrote a book on Hindu Astronomy which was later prescribed for the M.A. Examination of Calcutta University and he made translations of well-known Tamil works of Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy.¹⁵

15. Address to the Former Pupils op. cit. p. 10 ; J. V. Chelliah : *A Century of English Education* (Tellipallai, 1922) pp. 42-61 ; *Anderson Report*, pp. 57 ff.

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In 1850 Sir Emerson Tennent made the following comment on the work of the Batticotta Seminary :¹⁶

' Batticotta, the headquarters of the mission, stands about six miles westward of Jaffna, in the midst of well-cultivated rice farms and groves of palmyra and cocoa-nut palm. The whole establishment is full of interest, and forms an impressive and a memorable scene—the familiar objects and arrangements of a college being combined with the remarkable appearance and unwonted costumes of the students ; and the domestic buildings presenting all the peculiar characteristics of Oriental life and habits. The sleeping apartments, the dining hall, and the cooking-room are in purely Indian taste, but all accurately clean ; and, stepping out of these, the contrast was striking between them, and the accustomed features of the lecture-room with its astronomical clock, its orrery, and transit instrument ; the laboratory with its chemical materials, retorts and electro-magnetic apparatus, and the Museum with its arranged collection of minerals and corralines to illustrate the geology of Ceylon. But the theatre was the centre of attraction, with its benches of white-robed students, and lines of turbaned heads, with upturned eager countenances, " God's image carved in ebony ". The examination which took place in our presence was on History, Natural Philosophy, Optics, Astronomy, and Algebra. The knowledge exhibited by the pupils was astonishing ; and it is no exaggerated encomium to say that, in the extent of the course of instruction, and in the success of the system of communicating it, the Collegiate Institution of Batticotta is entitled to rank with many an European University '.

The special committee appointed to enquire into the work of the Seminary at the time of the Anderson Deputation wrote that—

' there is a core of able and well-qualified native teachers, fitted to give instruction in all important branches, and the attainments of those under their charge we such as in many cases to do honor both to the teachers and pupils. It [the Seminary] has attained a commanding influence in the community as a literary and scientific institution, and is a stepping stone by which many have been able at a cheap rate, to rise to posts of influence and emolument ' .¹⁷

The same committee reported on the results of the work of the Seminary by providing the following statistics :—

The whole number who have sustained membership is	670
The whole number of students now living who have been educated is	454
Of these there are in mission service	112
Of whom there are employed by the American Ceylon mission	81
The number in service of Government in Ceylon and India	158
The number in different kinds of business in Ceylon and on the continent	111
Those whose employment is unknown and who are not to be employed in any useful business	73

16. Tennent : p. 178.

17. *Anderson Report*, pp. 61-2.

18. *Anderson Report*, pp. 62-63.

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The whole number of church members	352
Number ex-communicated	92
Whole number who have died ; [eight of whom after ex-communication]	72
Present number connected with Protestant churches	196
The number now connected with the American Mission churches	185

The institution has raised up a class of native assistants who have greatly aided the mission in carrying on their work, and who will, we trust, be of still greater service as preachers and pastors in different parts of the field. Many of them are the fruits of the revivals to which allusion has been made, and are indeed the most promising fruit of the institution.

There are also some among those who are not connected with us, but are engaged in government and other service, who we hope, are Christians, and honor their professions by a humble and consistent life.

Aside from the above results, the seminary has exerted an influence in the land which cannot be mistaken, in waking up the native mind, in diffusing useful knowledge, and creating a power, which if directed into the right channel, will do much for the elevation of this people. There is a class in the community who have in a measure, been freed from the bondage of superstition, whose views have been liberalized by science, and who may do much for the improvement of their countrymen'.

The Batticotta Seminary and the Uduvil Girls' School were at the apex of the Educational structure of the American mission. At the base were the free vernacular schools which they opened at nearly every mission station and the state of these schools during the period under review can be seen from the following table¹⁹ :—

<i>Period</i>	<i>Number of Schools</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Total</i>
1815-1820	11	427	4	431
1820-1825	42	1,584	256	1,840
1825-1830	83	2,643	628	3,271
1830-1835	103	3,481	698	4,179
1835-1840	105	3,297	680	3,977
1840-1845	89	2,453	1,149	3,602
1845-1850	95	3,144	1,089	4,233
1850-1854	74	2,371	1,075	3,446

The number of English schools established and maintained by the mission was of course much less but as it will be noted from this and the following table there was a gradual falling off of the numbers in both English and vernacular schools in the latter part of this period. Although the committees which

¹⁹. *Anderson Report*, p. 47.

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were appointed at the time of the Anderson deputation to survey the educational system pointed out that this diminution specially in the English schools was due to stricter admissions to the asking of payments from pupils for books and stationery provided and to the reduction of admissions to the Batticotta Seminary, there is little doubt that the Home Committee's criticisms of the Ceylon missionaries and their policy of over-stressing education at the cost of evangelism and the reduction of grants from America also contributed to the lessening of both schools and pupils.

The position concerning the English schools was as follows²⁰ :—

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Schools</i>	<i>Number of Pupils</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Schools</i>	<i>Number of Pupils</i>
1830	1	45	1843	8	166
1831	2	51	1844	7	170
1832	3	45	1845	11	291
1833	4	95	1846	13	452
1834	1	25	1847	15	582
1835	3	97	1848	16	618
1836	6	225	1849	14	501
1837	5	150	1850	15	502
1838	5	185	1851	14	270
1839	8	268	1852	9	317
1840	8	290	1853	8	229
1841	9	437	1854	6	
1842	8	388			

Two other aspects of the work of the mission which deserve special notice are its medical and printing establishments. The work of the Reverend Dr. John Scudder, a missionary physician had consisted of giving medical assistance not only to the American missionaries in Ceylon but to all in need of his services. He even went so far as to train a few young men from the schools in the principles and practice of western medicine—thus being the founder of the first medical school in the island. In 1836 Dr. Nathan Ward who had been in Jaffna from 1833 took charge of this department of the mission including the training of students—a work which he continued till 1847 when Dr. Samuel Fiske Green took over. As a result of this pioneer medical missionary work on western lines many thousands of the people of Jaffna were given medical

²⁰. *Anderson Report*, p. 44.

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attention at little cost, a number of young people were educated in the principles of western medicine, and the Christian religion was once again shown to have a real social concern. In 1855 it was reported that the medical establishment run by Dr. Green with the assistance of three locally trained young men cost about £60 a year. There was a medical class of eight of whom seven were past pupils of the Batticotta Seminary. An average of about two thousand cases had been treated annually and for the two previous years it had received a very helpful grant of £50 per year from the Government of Ceylon.²¹

The printing press too did useful work both for the mission and the people. During this period it was under the supervision of a missionary printer but it gave employment in 1850 to about thirty-five local assistants. Its work consisted of printing elementary English and Tamil school books—any further requirements for schools being obtained from England and India—and undertaking Bible and Tract Society publications, mission and seminary reports and occasional work for the residents. Till the end of 1854 the Press had produced 171, 747, 198 pages of printed matter. In 1855 the whole establishment was transferred to Tamil management: the printing to Messrs. Ripley and Strong and the binding to Messrs. Dana and Winslow. Among its best known publications was the English part of *The Morning Star*: a semi-monthly paper published in English and Tamil and begun in 1841 under two Tamils. It became a mission paper and still fills a very important place in local journalism. It was 'devoted to education, science and general literature and to the dissemination of articles on agriculture, government and religion with a brief summary of important news'. With a refreshing catholicity of taste and in accordance with the best canons of journalism it welcomed articles even against the basic message it sought to propagate—that of the Christian faith—and so did a great deal to promote religious thought. In 1850 it had about seven hundred subscribers of whom five-sixths were Tamils. And it was not too great a claim that the mission made when it summed up the achievements of *The Morning Star* in 1855 by stating:

'As the number of educated natives has increased, and they have become more widely scattered, this periodical has seemed more and more necessary, as a means of retaining that influence over them, which is a result of their having been trained up under our fostering care, and which we have tried to make use of specially for their spiritual benefit'.²²

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21. *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, pp. 111. *Anderson Report*, p. 89 f; Manipay Records.

22. *M.R.* 1827, p. 113; 1840, pp. 214-5; Tennent, pp. 162-4; Address to the Former Pupils of Batticotta Seminary etc. Jaffna (1866); *Historical Sketch*: Manuscript Records at Bishop's House, Vaddukoddai.