

THE NAGAS

A MISSIONARY CHALLENGE



Dr. Angeline Lotsüro, MSMHC

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DR. ANGELINE LOTSÜRO, MSMHC

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*Dedicated
to the loving memory
of my late father Heshuo
who went to his heavenly reward
while I was away
for my doctoral studies*

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|---|
| AA | <i>Apostolicam Actuositatem</i> |
| AAS | <i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i> |
| AFER | <i>African Ecclesiastical Review</i> |
| AG | <i>Ad Gentes</i> |
| AJT | <i>Asian Journal of Theology</i> |
| APO | Angami Public Organization |
| ATSUM | All Tribal Students' Union of Manipur |
| BRTF | Border Road Task Force |
| CA | Catholic Action |
| CBCI | Catholic Bishops' Conference of India |
| CCC | <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> |
| CE | <i>Christian Endeavour</i> |
| CL | <i>Christifideles Laici</i> |
| CT | <i>Catechesi Tradendae</i> |
| CTC | Clark Theological College |
| DRDA | District Rural Development Agencies |
| EDNT | <i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> |
| EN | <i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i> |
| EP | <i>Evangelii Praecones</i> |
| FABC | Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences |
| GB | Gaon Bura |
| GNB | Guardian News Bureau |
| GS | <i>Gaudium et Spes</i> |
| IAS | Indian Administrative Service |
| IFAD | International Fund for Agricultural Development |
| IMR | <i>Indian Missiological Review</i> |
| IRM | <i>International Review of Mission</i> |
| ITS | <i>Indian Theological Studies</i> |
| KJ | <i>Kristu Jyoti</i> |
| LG | <i>Lumen Gentium</i> |
| MBC | Manipur Baptist Church |
| MEP | <i>Missions Etrangères de Paris</i> |
| NA | <i>Nostra Aetate</i> |
| NBCC | Nagaland Baptist Church Council |

| | |
|------------|--|
| NBCLC | National Biblical Catechetical Liturgical Centre |
| ND | No date |
| NE | North East |
| NEI | North East India |
| NENA | North East News Agency |
| NFS | Naga Students' Federation |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NIC | Naga Institute of Culture |
| NMA | Naga Mothers' Association |
| NNC (A) | Naga National Council (Adino) |
| NNC (K) | Naga National Council (Khudao) |
| NNC | Naga National Council |
| NP | No page |
| NPN | <i>Nagaland Post News</i> |
| NSCN (I-M) | National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) |
| NSCN (K) | National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang) |
| NWU | Naga Women's Association |
| PBC | Pontifical Biblical Commission |
| PTI | Press Trust of India |
| RM | <i>Redemptoris Missio</i> |
| SAR | South Asian Region |
| SDB | Salesians of Don Bosco |
| SDS | Society of the Divine Saviour |
| TBL | Tangkhul Baptist Long |
| TDNT | <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> |
| TMA | <i>Tertio Millennio Adveniente</i> |
| TPI | Theological Publications in India |
| UNI | United News of India |
| UNPO | Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization |

FOREWORD

The Nagas are undoubtedly one of the finest races inhabiting the northeastern part of India. They have come a long way after their coming into contact with the British and the early Christian missionaries like Miles Bronson and E.W. Clark. Christianity in the land inhabited by the Nagas is 125 years old and the quasicentennial year of its arrival was celebrated in 1997 with the pomp and solemnity befitting the occasion.

Every community is looking forward with hope to the new millennium. The Naga society, which is predominantly Christian, desires the same. Years of separatist movement has left the Nagas a divided and confused people. Today they want to wriggle out of violence in order to usher in an era of peace, progress and development. Caught up in the quagmire of modernization, the Naga society has lost its moorings and its pristine tribal values which are very dear to them and which make them real Nagas.

In this atmosphere of great human predicament, the book entitled *The Nagas: A Missionary Challenge* by Sr. Angeline Lotsüro MSMHC, is timely. After reading the manuscript of the book, I rested with some satisfaction. I felt satisfied not because she is going to solve all the problems faced by the Nagas with the publication of this book. I am happy primarily because this book is going to challenge the Nagas: and since it is coming from a Naga, no one can brush it aside as irrelevant. She is forthright in her view that the intelligentsia of the Naga society has the special responsibility of being the critically constructive voices of the Naga society.

In this book, Sr. Angeline exposes very well the true face of Naga Christianity which might be unpalatable to many. No one can deny the fact that the Naga society has become materialistic, consumeristic and corrupt. Its Christianity is shallow; there is dichotomy between faith and life; faith is not personalized; there is the aping of western culture and its ethos. In brief, Christianity is not yet rooted in the Naga soil.

The author is of the opinion that just as Jesus chose to be a Jew, so can He become a Naga. If God has created the Nagas as a

separate race with a culture and identity of their own. He expects them to approach Him in their own way. Therefore, the 'Nagaization' of Christianity is aimed at making the Gospel authentically Naga. Christianity has to clothe itself in Naga culture and to make Christ present among the Nagas as a Naga. Christianity cannot be authentically Naga unless and until Christ is born as a Naga, and becomes the truth, the life, and the way for the Nagas.

The challenge that the missionary faces in the Naga society is to present Christ in a manner that is acceptable to the Nagas who thus will be able to acknowledge Him as their own. Towards this task, the author proposes Christ as an elder, a chief, an ancestor and a liberator. Her Naga ecclesiology is one pregnant with the nuances of inculturation. The spirituality proposed is consonant with their love for nature. She further says that Nagaized Christianity has to be organized and structured in visible images and models understandable and meaningful to the Nagas. It should be less institutional, and more animational and missionary; always open to new avenues of ministry and acting as the conscience of society; it must be warm, simple, caring and loving; above all, it should be in tune with the Naga spirit of democracy. The Naga Church should also be a participatory Church. In the traditional way, all the members should have a say in the decision making process in the Church.

The missionary as well as the lay person who reads this books will not be able to sulk away and say: 'this is not for me'. He or she will be automatically drawn into a self-introspection and will definitely give a thought towards being an effective administrator or a dedicated mission worker. If one wishes to make a Naga a better Naga, and the Naga Church a better Naga Church, one will find a blueprint for such a reality in this book. I urge you to read this book and become a leaven in the Naga society. It will help you to be a vehicle that will take forward the Naga people into the next millennium with renewed faith and hope. May God bless the author and the Naga people.

Most Rev. Joseph Mittathany, DD
Archbishop of Imphal, Manipur

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Sr. Angeline Lotsüro, MSMHC

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Church, according to Vatican II, is the “universal sacrament of salvation.”¹ This role of the Church faces a tremendous challenge in this changed and rapidly changing world. A proper understanding of the mission of the Church will enhance its role as a sacrament of salvation. A search for a better understanding of the mission of the Church in the world today has generated a crisis in mission theology as pointed out by M. Amaladoss:

I think that the theory and practice of mission is in a crisis today. Some speak of a paradigm shift: the focus of mission has changed from the Church to the Reign of God. Others are concerned that mission is losing its very centre: Christ. Some are asking whether “foreign missions” are still relevant? Missionary Institutes are questioning their identity and revising their methods. This crisis is the result of two related developments: the field of mission, namely, the world has changed; the theology of mission has had a rather rapid development in recent years.²

The mission to the Nagas is to be pursued in the context of this crisis and the subsequent development of the understanding of mission. Before the Second Vatican Council, the aim of mission was to save souls. Hence, the thrust was to baptize as many as possible, and in practice it was

to establish a “mission compound”: convert a group of people, build a church, establish a community of Sisters, start a school, engage in works of mercy. Structurally and culturally, the planting of the church was more a transplanting of structures with which one was familiar back home.³

The Council, in its *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity*, broadened the idea of mission by its statement: “The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son

and the Holy Spirit. This plan flows from the “fountain-like love” of God the Father.”⁴ This was a discovery and an emphasis on the Trinitarian and Christological depths of mission.⁵ The origin of the missionary nature of the Church from the plan of the Father gives it a universal dimension. In *the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* too, the Council declares that “Christ is the light of humanity,” and expresses its heart-felt desire to “bring to all men that light of Christ which shines out visibly from the Church.”⁶ Here too, the Council affirms the universal salvific plan of God in Christ. The same Constitution on the Church further states:

Those also can attain to everlasting salvation who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do God’s will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience.⁷

The *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions* further points out that God is the God of all humanity and hence, his actions, providence and goodness extend to all: “God’s providence, manifestations of goodness, and saving designs extend to all.”⁸

The Council also affirmed the limitations of the Church as a pilgrim Church,⁹ as “seed and beginning of the Reign of God which it proclaims,”¹⁰ and its being “in the nature of sacrament - a sign and instrument of communion with God and unity among all people.”¹¹ The Church is further affirmed as that which “stimulates and advances human and civil culture;”¹² promotes the whole human person: “body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will,”¹³ and the Church wants to dialogue with all peoples: other Christians, believers in God, and even people of good will who are committed to human values.¹⁴

A broader vision of mission envisaged by the Council influenced mission theology subsequently. In Asia, the Bishops, at their meeting in Taipei in 1974, spoke of mission as inculturation, inter-religious dialogue, and liberation.¹⁵ Pope Paul VI, in his *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, gave a new vision of mission when he asserted:

Evangelization has been defined as consisting in the proclamation of Christ our Lord to those who do not know him, in preaching, catechesis, baptism and the administration of other sacraments. But no such defective and incomplete definition can be accepted for that complex, rich and dynamic reality which is called evangelization without the risk of weakening or even distorting its real meaning. Evangelization means the carrying forth of the good news to every sector of the human race so that by its strength it may enter into the hearts of men and women and renew the human race.¹⁶

Evangelii Nuntiandi furthermore says that evangelization must “deliver a message, especially relevant and important in our age, about liberation,”¹⁷ and further asserts the need to evangelize “human culture and cultures.”¹⁸ The shortcoming of this document, according to M. Amaladoss is that “it has a very inadequate view of other religions, seeing them as merely natural, human efforts.”¹⁹ However, Pope John Paul II “corrected this, especially in his symbolic gesture when he came together with the leaders of the other religions of the world to pray for peace in Assisi, in 1986. This very gesture gave a legitimacy to the other religions as media of divine-human dialogue.”²⁰ The ensuing picture of mission is a new paradigm:

vision of mission in a Trinitarian and cosmic perspective, ... broadening of mission to include inculturation, inter-religious dialogue, and liberation as integral dimensions of mission. From one point of view these are different activities corresponding to different realities of the world. Christians dialogue with cultures, religions, and socio-economic situations. One could say that these dimensions come into the limelight from different geographical areas of the world. Liberation is highlighted in Latin America, the other religions are dominant in Asia, and the Africans stress the need for cultural freedom and self-expression.²¹

This new mission paradigm is what D. Hesselgrave calls “bridge-building - relating to people of other cultures and religions.”²² He goes on to say: “Christian missions must take other cultures and religions more seriously and relate to them more

meaningfully or run the risk of being bypassed and left speaking to themselves in a language only they can understand.”²³ Some of the main terms and categories related to bridge-building in mission are identification, adaptation, accommodation, indigenization, inculturation, and dialogue... All of these terms have their own nuances, but the one term that at one time or another has been applied to all these and other bridge-building efforts is the new term “contextualization.”²⁴

The new term is said to have originated in a consultation, ‘Dogmatic or Contextual Theology’ held in Bossey, Switzerland in 1971 at which Bishop Nissiotis presided, and with the Third (Reform) Mandate Programme (1970 - 77) of the Theological Education fund (WCC sponsored) and its director, Shoki Coe.²⁵ The intention of these leaders was to go beyond indigenization and other similar approaches to mission and theology, and the term has become the “in word” in missiology ever since.²⁶ This is how the fathers of contextualization described what is meant by it in the words of S. Coe, as quoted by Hesselgrave:

... in using the word contextualization, we try to convey all that is implied in the familiar term indigenization, yet seek to press beyond for a more dynamic concept which is open to change and which is also future-oriented. Contextuality... is that critical assessment of what makes the context really significant in the light of *missio Dei*. It is the missiological discernment of the signs of the times, seeing where God is at work and calling us to participate in it. Authentic contextuality leads to contextualization... and this dialectic between contextuality and contextualization indicates a new way of theologizing. It involves not only words, but actions.²⁷

Contextualization, envisaged according to the description given above, “went too far in the direction of accommodating cultures, religions, and existential situations,”²⁸ according to Hesselgrave. The expression proposed by Hesselgrave is “prophetic accommodation” which does

not simply or even primarily mean to communicate the message of the biblical prophets. It meant to attempt to re-enact the

ministry of the prophets. It meant to go among peoples in their various contexts and deliver a divine message that speaks to their situation. ... it also meant that the message could be discerned only *by listening to, and joining in the struggles of the poor*. The prophet is one who is able to hear God's voice and see his acts in human affairs. He then articulates what he sees and hears.²⁹

There is, perhaps, no adequate term to define the reality of making the message of Christ incarnate in the culture of a people. The discussion regarding the nuances of the various terms currently used will continue. One thing that should be kept in mind is that words are given meaning by the users. They are tools.

The discussion above indicates that the present trend in mission theology is no more whether to contextualize the message of the Gospel or not, but how to contextualize it in the varying cultures of the peoples to whom the Gospel is proclaimed, as rightly pointed out by M. Amaladoss:

While all agree on the need of inculturation, there is little agreement about how it is done and what its implications are. The word 'inculturation' is a theological term patterned on the model of incarnation of the Word. It does not tell us anything about the process or its implications in the concrete. It becomes necessary then to look at it trying to happen in a particular context.³⁰

However, a brief presentation of how the Good News has been contextualized may be appropriate. Contemporary Christianity's concern for contextualization "stems from the growing awareness of the importance of "context" in the Church's understanding of itself, its faith, and its mission in the world."³¹

According to Herve Carrier, "since its inception, the Church's mission has taken the form of mutually enriching encounter between evangelizers and cultures."³² This, we can say, is because the process of inculturation has been scripturally based, borne out in the history of the Church with the support of the magisterium of the Church and is on a theologically sound footing.

The Christian Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are a testimony to the fact that God inculturated himself in human languages, categories, images, events and institutions. The Hebrews inculturated *El Shaddai* as uniquely their own, making him Yahweh who became their Immanuel in every moment and event of their life; and they, in turn, became exclusively the people of Yahweh.

Though Yahweh was all-powerful and concretely omnipresent in their lives, yet He remained wholly other and largely inaccessible to the Hebrews. This God who is very close, and at the same time, distant, became once and for all, one of them, pitching his tent among them in the new dispensation, in the person of Jesus Christ. This Jesus became the human face of God, God's face turned to man. The God of the Ten Words (Ten Commandments), became a God in human flesh and blood. We might call this the progressive inculturation of God into human life.

Scholars generally accept that the presentation of Jesus in the pages of the New Testament has been coloured by the cultural differences of those to whom he is presented. This is very clear especially in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. While the picture of Jesus in Matthew is typically Jewish, that of Luke is one meant for the Gentiles of the time. Hence, according to the late Father George Soares-Prabhu, the New Testament can be considered as a "model of inculturation" because

everywhere, ... the New Testament is adaptive. The wide variety of its functional forms and formulations testify to the immense effort put forth by the early church to make its preaching intelligible to the various communities (Jews, Greek-speaking Jews, Greeks) it addressed. In the unity of its proclamation and the diversity of the forms in which this proclamation is expressed, the New Testament thus stands as a model of the 'accommodation', 'adaptation' or 'inculturation' through which the Christian proclamation must become "all things to all men that (it) might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9: 22)."³³

The whole of the Bible too can be spoken of in terms of inculturation in so far as it is God's Word in human language.

God's Self-Revelation in human contexts, and written from a human point of view.³⁴ The relationship between the Bible and culture is succinctly described by Father J. J. Kilgallen, professor of New Testament at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome. He says: "cultures have been influenced by the Bible and the Bible has been influenced by cultures.... It is fascinating to see how the Bible adjusts to its surroundings, while not losing its perceptions because dominated by culture."³⁵

What we find on the pages of the Bible is the inculturation of the Word of God in the history of the people of Yahweh, in Israel and that of the early Christian community. This attempt to incarnate his Son Jesus Christ as well as his message have been the hallmark of missionary challenge everywhere in the history of missions of the Church.

Inculturation is not only seen on the pages of the Scriptures and in history, but also in the documents of the Church. Here we give a brief presentation. In the 1951 Encyclical of Pope Pius XII, *Evangelii Praecones*, the Pope says: "let not the Gospel on being introduced into any new land destroy or extinguish whatever its people possess that is naturally good, just or beautiful."³⁶ Similarly, he also talks about respect for native cultures:

The herald of the Gospel and messenger of Christ is an apostle. His office does not demand that he transplant European civilization and culture, and no other, to foreign soil, there to take root and propagate itself. His task in dealing with these peoples, who sometimes boast of a very old and highly developed culture of their own, is to teach and form them so that they are ready to accept willingly and in a practical manner the principles of Christian life and morality; principles, I might add, that fit into any culture provided it be good and sound, and which give that culture greater force in safeguarding human dignity and in gaining human happiness.³⁷

The Second Vatican Council can be said to be the landmark in the Church's attitude to different cultures.

The Church had learned early in its history to express the Christian message in the concepts and language of different

peoples and tried to clarify it in the light of the wisdom of their philosophers: it was an attempt to adapt the Gospel to the understanding of all men and the requirements of the learned, insofar as this could be done. Indeed, this kind of adaptation and preaching of the revealed Word must ever be the law of all evangelization.³⁸

The Council also speaks about the mutual enrichment of Gospel and culture,³⁹ and the recognition of every man's right to culture and its implementation.⁴⁰ Though the Council "never used the term inculturation nor did it deal extensively with the problem concerned with inculturation, but scattered through its documents are many elements that have a bearing on this topic."⁴¹

The Pope who specifically addressed the issue of inculturation, though not using the term itself, was Pope Paul VI as seen in his 1975 Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. In this, the Pope speaks about evangelization of cultures and says:

What matters is to evangelize man's culture and cultures (not in a purely decorative way as it were by applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to the very roots), in the wide and rich sense which these terms have in *Gaudium et Spes*.⁴²

When Pope John Paul II used the term 'acculturation' or 'inculturation,' in his Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*, he says: "The term 'acculturation' or 'inculturation' may be a neologism, but it expresses very well one factor of the great mystery of the Incarnation."⁴³ Having given this description of what inculturation may mean, the Pope spells out the purpose of this in the following words:

We can say of catechesis, as well as of evangelization in general, that it is called to bring the power of the Gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures. For this purpose, catechesis will seek to know these cultures and their components; it will learn their most significant expressions; it will respect their particular values and riches.⁴⁴

We can see a progress in the Pope's thinking on inculturation in his Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*. First of all, he makes

frequent references to the term, and secondly devotes a great deal of his Encyclical to the subject.

What is new, in a way, is the Pope's recognition about the urgency of inculturation and the process of inculturation. He spells this out in the following words: "It is not a matter of purely external adaptation, for inculturation means the intimate transformation of the authentic values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures."⁴⁵

The Pope also echoes the theme of mutual enrichment in *Gaudium et Spes*, when he says:

Through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community. She transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within.⁴⁶

The final element pointed out by the Pope is that the process of inculturation is a "slow journey, which accompanies the whole of missionary life."⁴⁷ This aspect is important for the evangelizers as well as the evangelized in that they both must, with courage and perseverance, pursue this process of incarnating the Gospel.

The basic theological ground for inculturation is the essential incarnate nature of Christianity. According to David Bosch, "from the very beginning the missionary message of the Christian Church incarnated itself in the life and world of those who had embraced it."⁴⁸ Hence, there is really no other option as Amalorpavadass puts it:

The choice is not between indigenisation and non-indigenisation, but being authentic church of Christ and not being a church at all. Again it is not for us to choose a church of our own making. The choice is rather between the church modelled upon the incarnation of the Word (LG 8) and the church that one would like to make to one's own liking.⁴⁹

He goes on to say that

Christianity has no identity except the spirit of Jesus Christ and the sign of fraternal love patterned on Christic love to the point of dying for others (Jn 13: 35). The rest is only cultural identity which is derived from a particular society and time which should be shed in view of inculturation in a new milieu.⁵⁰

Inculturation applied to the Nagas, is actually making real or actualizing the Incarnation of the Son of God among the Nagas. Jesus' historical incarnation as a Jew was accidental in the sense that what was essential was his becoming a human being, his Jewishness being accidental. Though accidental, it is indicative of a pattern⁵¹ that God wants to encounter every human race concretely as one of them, one among them. Jesus' becoming a Jew does not close the chapter but opens up infinite possibilities. He can become, and in fact he wants to become, a Naga.

If God has created the Nagas as a separate race with a culture and identity of their own, he expects them to approach Him in their own way, the Naga way. To borrow someone else's culture and identity in order to approach their God would be tantamount to a criticism of God's creative abilities: to say that even though you have created us a separate race, you have made us dependent on others when we have to approach you. This would be absurd. Hence, there is no other choice but to inculturate. We have adopted the expression *nagaization of Christianity* to express the desire and aim of making the Gospel authentically Naga as well as Christian. The term *nagaization* indicates the intention to make Christianity genuinely in tune with Naga culture. The thrust of our study is to indicate ways of making Christianity clothe itself in Naga culture or making Christ present among the Nagas as a Naga. The historical fact of Christ's birth as a Jew is indicative of the possibility, and in fact, of his desire to be born among every people.

Doubts have been raised as to the relevance of this title because the Nagas are already by and large Christians. We have pointed out that a portion of the Nagas are yet to become Christians. However, the greater challenge the Nagas pose to missionaries is in the area of what M. Amaladoss says of the African Church, namely 'cultural freedom' and 'self expression.' However, both

these phrases can be summed up in the word inculturation because inculturation is to be culturally free in order to express oneself by it. The Nagas need to shed the Western cultural garb of their Christianity and clothe it with that of their own, to express the Gospel message in their own way.

M. Amaladoss has rightly pointed out that “the Gospel in relation to culture has a twofold task: it must find embodiment - incarnate itself - in a culture to become a local church; it must also seek to transform the culture of the people among whom it is made present by this local church.”⁵² What is needed in the Naga Church today is precisely to make the Gospel incarnate itself, enflesh itself in the Naga culture in order to become a local Church. Though Naga Christianity is 125 years, it has not yet been really rooted in the soil. This is conveyed clearly by the popular saying: “The Baptist Church is too American and the Catholic Church is too Roman.”

The challenge for the missionaries to the Nagas could also be in terms of the three situations pointed out by Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*. The first situation is where “peoples, groups and socio-cultural contexts in which Christ and his Gospel are not known, or which lack Christian communities sufficiently mature to be able to incarnate the faith in their own environment and proclaim it to other groups.”⁵³ Though the Pope says that “this is mission *ad gentes* in the proper sense of the term”⁵⁴ it is still a challenge to missionaries among the Nagas precisely because Christian faith has not yet been *incarnated* in the Naga environment. The second situation is where the Church exercises her normal pastoral care. The Naga Church needs missionaries for this ministry too. Perhaps, inadequate pastoral care is the reason why the faith has not so far been incarnated. The third situation is what the Pope calls

an intermediate situation, particularly in countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger Churches as well, where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ

and his Gospel. In this case what is needed is a “new evangelization” or a “re-evangelization.”⁵⁵

The last part of the third situation, namely, ‘living a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel’ is applicable to the Naga situation as is evident in our evaluation of Naga Christianity. However, it must be pointed out that it is not due to the loss of ‘a living sense of faith’, nor because of considering themselves ‘no longer members of the Church’ but because of the inability to incarnate the faith. This inability has been expressed by the Nagas themselves in terms of a nominal, superficial, fashion, Christianity. The task of incarnating the faith is the unfinished *agenda* of the mission *ad gentes*. At the same time, this neglect in the past calls for a new evangelization in order to bring about “a great springtime for Christianity”⁵⁶ or “new springtime of Christian life”⁵⁷ among the Nagas. Hence, Naga Christianity is still a challenge to missionaries on two fronts: inculturation and new evangelization.

As D. J. Hesselgrave says, “thanks to modern technology, today’s missionaries find that the first ten thousand miles in mission are relatively easy. It is the last eighteen inches that are difficult.”⁵⁸ This is true of mission work among the Nagas. The mission among the Nagas so far could be compared to the ‘first ten thousand miles’ of preaching, converting and baptizing which was comparatively easy; but what remains is taking the difficult last step of ‘eighteen inches’ which is “to relate meaningfully to people of a very different culture and religion, to attain mutual understanding, to secure more than superficial change.”⁵⁹ The Nagas still remain a missionary challenge because the last step has not yet been taken or it is, at the most, just begun. L. McKinney, in an article entitled “Missionaries in the Twenty-First Century: Their Nature, their Nurture, their Mission,”⁶⁰ says that missionaries should learn to exegete the Word, exegete the world and bring these together in local theologies. This is the challenge for the missionaries to the Nagas. They might have exegeted the Word; but the *world of the Nagas* still needs to be exegeted. The challenge for the missionaries among the Nagas can also be seen in similar terms as J. M. De Mesa spells out for those of the Philippines. It is threefold:

First, it needs to relativise the Graeco-Roman or Euro-American cultural expressions of the Christian faith. Second, it has to de-stigmatize and re-value the indigenous culture(s). Third, it will have to reinterpret the Christian faith in indigenous categories.⁶¹

“Inculturation,” according to A. Shorter, in fact, “is a process which involves the destigmatization of alien cultures, and the self-emptying... of both the evangelizer and evangelized cultures.”⁶²

This work proposes ‘a new way of being Naga Christians,’ a ‘second spring.’ So far, Christ has largely remained a western Christ. He must become a Naga Christ known and called by names and titles that are evocative in the Naga heart, praised and worshipped in Naga ways and in this way, he (Christ), in turn, will become the Naga way, Naga truth and life. A Naga Christian Church will be organized along the lines of the Church of the Acts of the Apostles where there will be love, unity and fellowship. This will be, in fact, a re-living and a revival of the best and deepest value of Naga culture. The new way of being Naga Christians, then, is nothing else but making the genuine message of Christ’s Gospel grow out of the Naga soil and mature in the Naga way.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE NAGAS IN NAGALAND AND MANIPUR

INTRODUCTION

Northeast India, popularly known as the *seven sisters*, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura, are linked with the rest of India by a narrow corridor in eastern Bihar and West Bengal, winding its way between Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan in the north and Bangladesh in the south. Our work deals with the people whom we call *Nagas*. They inhabit the present State of Nagaland, parts of Manipur, Assam, the north-eastern parts of Arunachal Pradesh, the Somra tract and its contiguous parts of Myanmar.¹ Our focus is on the Nagas of Nagaland and Manipur. However, what we will say about the Nagas of these two states also applies to those living outside these areas.

In spite of their differences, the Nagas are believed to be one race. They have an affinity with the Mongoloid race. However, Dusanü highlights two different opinions on the question of the Naga race. Firstly, though the Nagas are predominantly Mongoloid in their physical appearance, they are not typical Mongols. The Caucasian elements are present among them in a remarkable degree. It is for this reason that the Mongoloid facial and other features are softened down in the Naga tribes. Secondly, though racially they belong to the Indo-Mongoloid types of the Himalayan region, they differ from the rest of the Indian population not only in origin, language and appearance but also in their way of life.²

The geographical distinctiveness of the hills and plains is matched by the social and cultural distinctiveness of the respective

populations. The Nagas are quintessentially a hill people.³ They are distinct from the rest of the Indian population: racially, linguistically, religiously and historically. We shall try to show this in the following pages.

I. THE TOPOGRAPHY OF NAGALAND AND MANIPUR

1. Nagaland

Nagaland is the sixteenth state of the Union of India and was inaugurated on December 1, 1963. It has one of the most uneven but beautiful terrain among the Indian states. It is the third smallest state of the country in area, after Sikkim and Goa.⁴ The state is situated in the north-eastern corner of India and is bounded by Arunachal Pradesh in the north, Assam in the west, Manipur in the south and Myanmar in the east.⁵ "Naga Hills are a wonderful land",⁶ says Randip Singh, captivated by the natural beauty of the state. Nature is exhibited in all her beauty in this land. These hills are beautiful, picturesque and colourful, as also fertile and full of resources.

The Naga Hills is a continuation of the Himalayan folded mountains. The formation belongs to the tertiary period. The general elevation of the state ranges from 914 metres to 3840 metres above sea level.⁷ Mount Saramati, situated in Tuensang district, is the highest peak of Nagaland and is 3,841 metres above sea level; and Japfü, which lies to the south of Kohima is the second highest peak of the state with an altitude of 3,048 metres above sea level.⁸ The state is divided into seven districts: Kohima, Phek, Mokokchung, Wokha, Zunheboto, Tuensang and Mon.⁹

Sprawling over 16,579 square kilometres, Nagaland, as per the census of 1991, has a population of 12,09,546.¹⁰ The major Naga tribes are: Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Chang, Khiamungan, Konyak, Lotha, Pochury, Phom, Rengma, Rongmei, Sangtan, Sema, Yimchunger, Zeliang.¹¹ Besides these, there are Naga and non-Naga tribes like Mao, Kachari, Kuki, Karbi, etc.

Numerous streams and rivers drain the state of Nagaland. Some of the important rivers are the Dhansiri, the Doyang, the Dikhu, the Milak, the Zungki and the Tizu. Most of these rivers originate from the central mountain ranges. From the centre, the rivers move north and southward.

Nature could not have been more kind to Nagaland. ♦ Sometimes, it is referred to as the *Switzerland of the East*, because of the exquisitely picturesque landscapes, the vibrantly colourful sunrise and sunset, lush and verdant flora. ... This is a land that represents an unimaginable beauty, moulded perfectly for a breath taking experience.¹²

Nagaland is also considered *a paradise state* for social sciences, as it is a fertile field for the study of anthropology and sociology because of its colourful cultural traditions, folklore, myths and legends as well as the customs of the Naga tribes.¹³

2. Manipur

Manipur is also one of the smallest states of the Indian Union. It is located at the extreme eastern border of the country. In the north, it is bounded by the state of Nagaland, in the east by Upper Myanmar, in the south by the Chin Hills of Burma and the state of Mizoram while its western boundary is formed by the Cachar district of Assam.¹⁴

Manipur, like Nagaland, is also endowed with scenic beauty and has been called by similar epithets. It literally means the *Land of Gems*, and is referred to by various other names too: such as *jewel of India*, *a little paradise*, *a flower on the lofty heights*, *the Kashmir of eastern India*, *the Switzerland of India*, *beautiful garden*,¹⁵ etc. The state is known by the various epithets because of the natural beauty of the surroundings, the softness of the air and the richness of the pastures and the lofty hills.

Manipur is essentially a mountainous state. One of the most striking features of Manipur is the consistent way in which the

mountains, at intervals, widen apart so as to enclose the fertile plains formed by the rivers. Physiographically, it can be divided into three well-defined regions: the Manipur valley, the Manipur Hills and the Barak plains.¹⁶ The Manipur valley is the largest and most valuable part of this state, but many other smaller ones burst upon the view of the traveller, each appearing like an oasis, hung from the confusion of wild and rugged mountains.¹⁷

Manipur has a total area of 22,327 square kilometres and a population of 18,26,714, according to the 1991 Census. There are as many as 29 recognized scheduled tribes in Manipur. They are: Aimol, Anal, Angami, Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Hmar, Kabui, Kacha Naga, Koirao, Koirang, Kom, Lamkang, Mao, Maram, Maring, Mizo, Monsang, Moyon, Paite, Purum, Ralte, Sema, Simte, Sokte, Tangkhul, Thadou, Vaiphei and Zou.¹⁸ The Meiteis, commonly called the 'Manipuris' is the dominant ethnic group of Manipur whose homeland is the Manipur valley and who form two-thirds of the population of Manipur. The hills are the abode of the various tribes.

II. THE NAGAS AND THEIR ORIGIN

1. The Term *Naga*

The term *Naga* has been given many derivations. The origin of the word is, therefore, shrouded in mystery. Different scholars have expressed different views. One explanation is that it is the European rendering of the Assamese *Naga* or the Hindusthani word *nanga* meaning 'naked'. One authority has explained it as coming from the Hindusthani word *nag* or mountain. Another attributes its origin to the Naga word *nok* meaning people. The Nagas themselves did not know the name originally and called each other by their tribal designation.¹⁹ According to Hutton, the leading authority on the tribes of the Northeast India, the word *Naga* means mountaineers.²⁰ Some others say that it is derived from the Burmese word *Naka* which means 'pierced ears'. In Konyak Naga the dialect *na* means ear and *ka* means hole which is quite similar to the Burmese word. According to this version, Naga means a people with pierced ears. This practice applies to

both men and women, young and old. The purpose is to wear ear rings or special decorations on festive occasions like the feast of 'pulling gates' or 'stones,'²¹ feast of merit, dances, and on other village festivals. Since having a pierced ear is a common characteristic of the Nagas, it can be an ethnic connotation.²²

No explanation is really convincing nor satisfactory. But whatever the origin may be, the Nagas today simply accept with pride the fact that they belong to an old independent race known to others as the Nagas.²³ The unknown origin of the term 'Naga' has an advantage. No single tribe can claim it to be its own nor reject it. It is nobody's in particular, but everybody's in general. It unifies.

2. The Naga Tribes²⁴

The Nagas are concentrated in the two states of Nagaland and Manipur, and certain parts of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh of India and in the Somra Tract of the Upper Myanmar as already mentioned earlier. The following Naga tribes have been identified and located.

Nagaland: The following seventeen Naga tribes inhabit the state of Nagaland. According to the alphabetical order, they are: Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Chang, Kalya Kongnuyu, Khiamungan, Konyak, Liangmei, Lotha, Pochury, Phom, Rengma, Rongmei, Sangtam, Sema, Yimchunger and Zemei.

Manipur: The following Naga tribes live in Manipur. They are: Anal, Chiru, Chothe, Kharam, Koireng, Lamkang, Mao/Paomei,²⁵ Maram, Maring, Moyon, Monsang, Tangkhul, Tarao, Thangal, Zeliangrong (Zemei, Liangmei, Rongmei, Puimei).

Arunachal Pradesh: The Nocte, Tangsha and Wancho Naga tribes live in Arunachal Pradesh.

Assam: Some Rengmas, Rongmeis and Zemeis live in Assam.

Myanmar: A good number of Konyaks, Phoms, Tangkhuls and Yimchungers live also in Myanmar.

Given above are the recognized major Naga tribes. There are others who were part of the bigger tribes but now want a separate identity; however, they have not yet been officially recognized.

3. **Origin and Migration**

The origin of the Naga tribes and their ancient history are shrouded in obscurity. Anthropologists, ethnologists, archaeologists and historians hold different opinions about the place of their origin and the time of their arrival in their present abode. Thus J.P. Mills says: "the problem of the ultimate origin and composition of the Naga tribes still awaits solution."²⁶

Makhel, a village located in the Mao area of Manipur is considered by some of the Naga tribes to be the place of their origin and the place from where they dispersed in different directions. The Makhel village is about 38 kilometres away from Kohima, the capital of Nagaland.²⁷

There are several legends which speak about how the Nagas came to their present homeland. A few of them are given below.

a. The Khezakenoma Tradition

The Angamis, the Semas, the Rengmas and the Lothas subscribe to the Khezakenoma legend. According to this legend, the village had a large stone slab having magical properties. Paddy spread on it to be dried used to double in quantity by evening. The three sons of the couple who owned the stone used it by rotation. One day there was a quarrel among the sons as to whose turn it was. Their parents, fearing blood shed, set fire to the stone which cracked as a result. The spirit of the stone went to heaven and the stone lost its miraculous properties. The three sons thereafter left Khezakenoma and went in different directions. From these arose the Angami, the Sema and the Lotha tribes.²⁸

b. The Lotha Tradition

J. P. Mills records one of the Lotha traditions regarding their origin. It says that the Lothas and the plainsmen were once one people who migrated from a place called Lengka, somewhere north of the Naga Hills. They split up into two bodies, one of which became the plainsmen of the Brahmaputra valley and the other, the Nagas of the hills.²⁹

c. The Rengma Tradition

The same author asserts that the Rengmas, together with the Angamis, the Semas and the Lothas, belong to the group of tribes that locate their point of dispersal at Khezakenoma, but with a little different version from that of P. Singh's account.

According to J. P. Mills, the story runs as follows. The two sons of the ancestress of the Khinzonyu clan quarrelled over the question of who had the right to use the miraculous stone. Their mother was the arbiter over their quarrel. She gave a wrong judgement by giving the right to the younger son. Thereupon, the elder son left the village with his followers and set off towards the north. His example was followed by other discontented families, and the migration and dispersion began. The body that was one, split into different groups and thus came about the Angamis, the Semas, the Lothas and the Rengmas.³⁰

d. The Ao Tradition

The Ao tradition states that the ancestors of the tribe came out of the earth at *Lungterok* (six stones) lying on the top of a spur on the right bank of the river Dikhu just about opposite Mokongtsü.³¹ In another tradition, the Aos uphold that their origin lay in Chungliyimti (present day Tuensang) before they migrated to Ungma and spread to other places.³²

e. The Mao Tradition

One legend of the Maos narrates that the Nagas are descendents of a woman named *Dzüli Mosüro* who conceived in a mysterious way with the help of the spirit in the form of a cloud while she was sitting under a banyan tree at Makhel. She gave birth to three sons named *Okhe* (tiger), *Ora* (god), *Omei* (man). Other descendents of *Dzüli Mosüro* were *Chutwo* (the father of the Meiteis, the plainsmen of Manipur valley), *Alapha* (the father of *Kolamei* or *mayang* (outsider) and *Khephio* (the father of the Nagas). It is said that in the beginning they lived together at Makhel. But as their number increased, they had to disperse to different parts of the region as we find them today.³³

f. The Tangkhul Tradition

The Tangkhul tradition regarding their origin as recorded by T. C Hodson is as follows. They say that “they came out of a cave in the earth at a place called Murringphy in the hills. They attempted to leave this cave one by one, but a large tiger, who was on the watch, devoured them successively as they emerged. Seeing this the occupants of the cave used the stratagem of throwing out the effigy of a man they had dressed up, and this distracted the attention of the tiger and so they took the opportunity to leave the cave in a body. The tiger fled at the sight of the number of the people. They placed a large stone on the top of a high hill near the spot to mark the location from where they spread in the hills.³⁴

g. The Maram Tradition

The Marams believe that they originated from a couple who were the only survivors of a great flood which destroyed all mankind. Finding themselves alone, they went into the jungle together. In their dream a god came and told them that they might marry but on condition that henceforth none of their descendants should eat the flesh of the pig. From this couple for whose union divine consent had been given, sprang two brothers. The elder went to Cachar and the younger founded the village of Maram³⁵ and thus the Maram society as well.

Though one may not literally believe the legends as indicating the autochthonous origin of the various tribes, one cannot easily dismiss them altogether. These legends are attempts by the people to explain their origins. On the whole they show that the people came from some place other than their present habitats. Most of the stories also tell us that originally most of the tribes were one. On the chronology of their migration, A. Yonuo says that it is possible that the first wave of migrants were the Maos, the Angamis, the Semas, the Rengmas, the Rongmeis and the Lothas who moved up from the south through the mountainous fringes touching the valley of Manipur to the north. They settled down at Makhel near the hills of Japfü peak. After living there for

some years, the Maos settled down permanently in this area and the rest went in different directions and settled down in the places where the Angamis, the Semas, the Rengmas, the Chakhesangs, the Zeliangrongs and the Lothas are today.³⁶

The people who at present are called the Tangkhuls, the Sangtams, the Khiamungans, the Yimchungers, the Changs and the Aos might have entered their present territory at different times by different routes, but it is apparent that originally they belonged to one group and they came by the same way of Thaugdut near the river Chindwin in Burma.³⁷

That the Nagas have a common origin is sure, but the exact history of this origin is not certain. All sorts of theories have been put forward. They have been said to be associated with the head-hunters of Malay and the races of the southern seas. Some trace their origin to China. According to Gangumei Kabui:

looking into the affinities between the various Naga tribes with the tribes of the islands of South East Asia, like the Dayaks and Ingorots of Indonesia, and the Naga use of artefacts found in the sea, it has been conjectured that the Nagas had traversed from South West China to Burma and Western Thailand and to islands of South East Asia and moved north again and entered into the present habitat in North East India and some areas of Upper Burma.³⁸

III. THE NAGA SOCIETY

The Naga society is an aggregate of communities who share a set of structures or principles in common but who emphasize them differently. To know who the Nagas are, one needs to have an idea of their various socio-political institutions, customary laws, religious beliefs and cultural life.

1. The Naga Tribal Institutions

a. Village

One of the outstanding social and political institutions among the Naga people is the village. The village may consist of

just ten households or as many as over one thousand households. It varies from village to village. For example, Kohima village (Bara Basti)³⁹ is one of the biggest and most populous villages in Asia. Among the Maos, there are some big villages having a population ranging from 2000 to 2,500.

The village is usually divided into three or more *khels* depending upon the number of clans, its size and population. Usually a *khel* appears to be nothing more than the convenient division of a village in which men of various clans live. In the early days, a Naga village was defensively situated as well as fortified with stone walls, bamboo spikes, wooden gates and, in some cases, a ditch running around the village to slow down sudden and surprise head-hunting raids.⁴⁰

A Naga village, says M. Horam, "is an economically and politically independent unit and each village is well demarcated to avoid inter-village feuds."⁴¹ The real political unit of the tribe is the village, while for most purposes the social unit is the *khel* or division of a village which is based on clanship.⁴²

For the Nagas, the ancestral village is something to be preserved and cherished. Hence, shifting from village to village is seldom done. In fact, their attachment to their native village is considerable. In this regard it will be appropriate to highlight the words of P. Kullu:

... for the tribals their village means everything - their country, their nation, their tribe, indeed, their whole world. It is in their village that the tribals live out their economic, political, religious and family life. It is here that they have their altar, and their place of government, their court of justice; in a word, everything.⁴³

Though this is true of most of the tribes in the Northeast, it is especially so of the Naga tribes.

b. Chieftainship

Each village has a headman or chief who is literally the patriarch of the village. He is normally assisted by the village

councillors who are the representatives of the village drawn from the various clans.⁴⁴

The title may differ from tribe to tribe, and the term of office may also differ. He may be popularly elected or hold office by heredity. The Semas, the Konyaks and the Maos have hereditary chieftainship or monarchy. Among the Konyaks, the *Angs* (king) have such great power that their words are accepted by the people as law.⁴⁵ However, it is said that the Angamis were never ruled by hereditary chiefs and so they choose one individual by consensus to be their chief. Wealth and prowess in war certainly gave a man a good deal of influence, but the villages were run strictly on democratic lines and no one could command his neighbours.⁴⁶

The Aos have a republican form of government in which a sizeable council of elected headmen called *Tatars* rule with limited authority. The Angamis, the Lothas, the Rengmas and some others have a peculiar type of democracy with some variations in the nature of its composition.⁴⁷ The Tangkhul village chief is called *Awunga*. He is usually the unanimous choice of the heads of all the families residing in the village.⁴⁸

Among some Naga tribes, the village chief plays a dual role, namely, secular and religious cum ceremonial. He is the pivot around whom all the social functions and festivals have to revolve. In fact, he is the custodian of the village agricultural calendar. As the headman and the first man in the village, he opens the village festivals; he is the first to sow seeds, the first to plant and the first to harvest.⁴⁹ He is responsible for the defence of the village. He also maintains peace and harmony in the village. The chief is the ambassador to other villages and government officials. In his house all the villagers, even strangers, always find hospitality and help.⁵⁰

c. The Village Council

Though there are certain Naga tribes which have hereditary or elected village chiefs, these are reduced to nominal heads. The councillors or the village elders who are the representatives of the people, assist the chief in all important matters. Hence, the Naga

tribes have always stressed on the values of a democratic outlook, considering everyone equal.⁵¹ There is no specific quorum or tenure of office for the members of the village council. It functions as the need arises - disputes between individuals or clans, theft, murder, adultery and the like. Among the Mao Nagas, the headman or *Movuo* has the power for the administration of *Mani* or *Genna*⁵² days. But for the administration of justice, it is the council of elders.⁵³ Though it is not responsible for the settlement of disputes, it brings effective implementation of its decisions.

Among the Lothas, according to J. P. Mills, the post of the chief, *Ekyung*, has virtually ceased to exist and the word is now rarely heard. Villages are managed by an informal council of old men and men of influence with a headman elected by the government through whom the village is administered.⁵⁴

Whatever be the tenure of office and functions, in every village there is a council and it is the principal governing organ of the village. The members of the council are either elected or appointed. In most cases, each clan sends one representative to the council.⁵⁵

d. Family

In the Naga society, the family is the basic and, indeed, the most important unit. A Naga family consists of husband and wife, their unmarried and minor children. The size of the family may vary from issueless couples to families having children ranging in number from four to twelve or more.⁵⁶

The Naga society is both patriarchal and patrilineal and thus descent is traced from the father's side.⁵⁷ Hence, by and large, the father is the head of the family. His authority is all pervading and felt by the other members of the family. However, the role of the mother is never minimised as an insignificant one. Rather, she is considered the 'queen of the family' as she has a better say in the family circle relating to household affairs.⁵⁸

Joint family system is not found in the Naga society. Hence, married sons remain separate from their parents and another house

is built. If the house is not built, a portion of the house is divided and a separate kitchen is built. However, this custom differs from tribe to tribe.

e. Clan

A Naga clan is composed of a certain number of families occupying a definite portion of the village and is strictly exogamous. The members of a clan are believed to have descended from a common ancestor by whose name the clan is called.⁵⁹ Earlier it was mentioned that in the tribal life the family is the basic, the most important unit. The next important thing is the relationship between the family unit and its clan. This is because the clan is an extended family. In the matter of representation in the village court, the eldest clan member is its representative.⁶⁰

The clan relationship was very strong in the olden days and the members of the clan shared their crops with families who did not have a good harvest. In times of sickness and other misfortunes, other members of the clan would immediately come to the help of the needy family. Even to this day, though in a lesser degree, this traditional custom of sharing is common and the bond of clan relationship is quite strong.⁶¹

This is something the Nagas should not lose. Hence, Horam writes: "it would be difficult for an individual to exist without being a member of a group which shares his joys and sorrows and with whose well-being he identifies his own."⁶²

f. The *Morung* (Bachelors' Dormitory)

The *Morung* or bachelors' dormitory is an institution common to the Naga tribes and many other tribes of Northeast India. In the traditional Naga society, boys and girls, after the attainment of puberty, sleep in their respective dormitories till they get married. The custom is still practised among some Naga tribes. The dormitory is a large hall in which the bachelors sleep at night. It is like a youth club and the centre of all the village activities of the youth. The detailed management of the dormitories varies from

tribe to tribe.⁶³ In some Naga villages the *morung* is constructed near the main gate of the village so as to quickly turn out armed young men in any emergency. For some others, the house of a prestigious man is the *morung*.⁶⁴ The rules and regulations of *morungs* also differ from tribe to tribe. In most of the Naga tribes, the entry of girls into the boys' dormitory is strictly forbidden. For the Lothas, the *morung (champo)* is the best architectural effort of which they are capable.⁶⁵

The functions of the *morungs* may differ from tribe to tribe but it generally serves as a recreation club, a centre of education, art and discipline and for ceremonial purposes.⁶⁶ The institution has made an immense impact on the Naga life through the ages because it was a socializing institution. J. P. Mills, writing on the function of the *morung* among the Rengmas, says:

Decaying morungs mean a decaying village and well-used morungs a vigorous community. It is in the morungs that old men tell of the great deeds of the past, and the coming generation is taught to carry on the old traditions in the future. When the past is no longer gloried in, the future seems dark and uncertain, the morungs fall into decay.⁶⁷

One of the reasons for establishing the *morungs* for boys and girls could be to give greater freedom to the children, to train them in the various arts of life and to discipline them for future responsibilities. In this regard, writing on the Aos, J. P. Mills comments on the strict discipline followed in the early Ao Naga *morungs*: He says: "Men who are now middle aged say that when they first entered the morung, they were very severely disciplined, not to say bullied. They were, for instance, held over the fire and compelled to endure the heat without a cry."⁶⁸

For the Tangkhuls, the *morung (longshim)* is a school for the teaching of Tangkhul history in the form of folklore, song and dance, sports and games, discipline, hard work, spirit of service in community living and resilience in all matters of life.⁶⁹

Among the Mao Nagas, though girls entering into the boys' *morung (khrüchozü)* is strictly forbidden, the boys can pay visits to

the girls at the girls' dormitory (*chilozü*) and sing songs on a competitive basis, and views on different activities are also exchanged.⁷⁰

Though the running of a *morung* and its importance may differ from tribe to tribe, it remains for most Naga tribes a useful 'seminary' for training young men and women in their social and other activities.⁷¹ The *morung* was a sanctuary. A culprit who had taken refuge in it could not be harmed so long as he remained under its roof. In fact, the *morung* was the pride of the village.⁷² It was here that the children learnt the advantages of cooperation and responsibility, and moulded their lives to fall in line with the Naga way of life.⁷³ The age groups of the *morung* were the natural labour teams for every public work and the rights and obligations of every member of the community were regulated by his/her place in the age-group system.⁷⁴

However, with the coming of Christianity and in the wake of modernisation, this practice of the *morung* system is almost non-existent in most of the tribes. This is perhaps inevitable to a certain extent, but the question is whether it has not left a void in the Naga society.

2. Cultural Life of the Nagas

The festivals and ceremonies of any society reflect its culture. This holds true for the Nagas too. The life of the Nagas is well punctuated by ceremonies and festivals. These festivals can be grouped into agricultural feasts, prestigious feasts or feasts of merit and diplomatic feasts.⁷⁵

a. Agricultural Festivals

The agricultural festivals are the most widespread among the different Naga tribes.⁷⁶ The cultivation festival marks the beginning or end of the sowing of all seeds and the propitiation of the gods of the crops for a good harvest. The harvest festival, celebrated at the end of the year or at the commencement of the New Year, is a feast of thanksgiving for most Naga tribes.⁷⁷ The

duration of these feasts differ from tribe to tribe. It usually lasts for five to ten days or more. What is common to all the Nagas is that feasts are great occasions for an unlimited consumption of rice-beer and meat.⁷⁸ During these festivals, certain customary religious rites and purification ceremonies are performed. Individuals as well as the whole village are subjected to what is known as *genna* which means that the people are under a taboo as regards movement outside the village or doing any work.⁷⁹ This shows that these feasts are not merely days of rejoicing but also have religious significance.

Singing and dancing form an important feature of a feast. Through songs, dances and folktales the young generation learn about their traditions and culture. The Naga songs are characterised by “historical episodes, fables, romance, war and life adventure.”⁸⁰ Naga dances are graceful and slow or energetic and quick depicting the various moods such as peace, war and agricultural pattern.⁸¹ The form of dance differs from tribe to tribe.

The Nagas in general celebrate their festivals with great happiness and jubilation. The names of the festivals, the time and duration and the mode of celebration differ. Yet there are some common features. During the festivals people visit one another’s house, drinking rice-beer and eating meat. Newly married couples visit their families and receive blessing from the families they visit.⁸²

The Nagas are fond of colourful dresses and decorations. During the festival days, they dress in their best clothes and dance. They use multi-coloured beads as necklaces, cowries, coloured hair and beautiful feathers. Naga women weave beautiful and colourful shawls and each tribe is identified by their colourful shawls.⁸³

b. The Feast of Merit

A feast given by an individual is an important part of Naga life. The feasts of merit are the hallmark of social distinction for a Naga village. As the Nagas are very conscious of their status, a rich Naga is never satisfied with a large holding, a bumper crop or a rich wealth of cattle, unless his distinct social stand is

recognized.⁸⁴ Thus, the feast of merit converts material wealth, such as cattle, rice and rice-beer into social status and it allows men to advance in society.⁸⁵ However, the mode of celebration and duration of the feasts of merit differ. In some cases, it is a fortnight long festival during which the host feeds the entire village with rice, meat and rice-beer.

The feast of merit also entitles the celebrant to wear special dress and ornaments, and to decorate his house in a particular manner marking him out from others in the village.⁸⁶ Among the Maos, the families which have hosted several feasts of merit use *Zhosomei* as their title and when the customary stones are erected they are entitled to wear *Zhososa* and *khephi kadesa* (a shawl with animal figures woven therein).⁸⁷

During the feasts of merit, the wife plays an important role in the *genna* and so only a married man may host a feast of merit.⁸⁸ Before this great feast takes place, there is also a ceremony of pounding large quantities of rice for making rice-beer. All the adult males and females of the feast-giver's clan come together and prepare the drinks.⁸⁹ For the Maos, if the rice-beer runs short the host of the feast will fall into dire disgrace.⁹⁰

Whatever be the mode of celebration, the feasts of merit serve as an important social function: "The need for lavish outlay on cattle, pigs and rice-beer is an incentive to production and ensures that poorer members of the clan and village are feasted when they cannot themselves afford to kill pigs or cattle."⁹¹ The feast also ensures that perishable food stuff is not wasted in the hands of rich people.⁹²

Praise and honour in Naga society is allotted not by what men have acquired but by what they have given. Prestige in the society is directly linked with the increased capacity to give, which is demonstrated in the most explicit way by the celebration of the feasts of merit by most of the Naga tribes.

c. Diplomatic Feasts

There is another great and significant feast of the Nagas which we may call a 'diplomatic feast.' This is a rare feast because

it is held among feuding or warring villages in order to sheathe the sword and maintain friendly relations.⁹³ The Mao Nagas call this feast *Aso koto* which means a “covenant or solidarity meal.”⁹⁴ Before celebrating this feast the elders of the concerned villages come to an agreement first. When the agreement is concluded by both the parties, all the able-bodied men of one village go to the other village for the celebration of the feast. On the arrival of the guest party, each adult of the host village invites a man from the guest village, takes him to his home and entertains him with great honour, respect and hospitality and the best food is served to him. During the feast they discuss their mutual problems, settle them in a spirit of warm friendliness and common interest. They also discuss on the continued maintenance of peace and tranquillity between them and for mutual assistance when the need occurs.⁹⁵ The feast may last two or three days. This is also usually reciprocated.⁹⁶ At the end of the celebrations in one village, each host takes his partner to his house and gives him hospitality for the night and thus they become friends. On the departure day,

every household prepares the best meat for their departing guest, so that he may eat it on the way or take it home. In addition to this, meat is also wrapped in wild banana leaf for the members of the guest’s family, who await for their fathers’ and brothers’ return. The guests are given a very warm farewell, in which shawls are given to be kept as remembrance of their acquaintance and friendship. The departing guests leave the village in a procession, in one or two lines amidst chanting and singing. No man or animals are allowed to cross their path once the procession starts moving.⁹⁷

This is how the people of the village of Maram Khullen became thick friends with their neighbouring Mao people, the Pudunamei villagers in particular. This celebration of the diplomatic feast is the ratification of the treaty of friendship agreed upon by the elders of the villages concerned.

d. Head-Hunting

Head-hunting was once very much in practice among the Nagas. Inter-village wars culminating in the taking of the enemy’s

head were part of the everyday life until the *Pax Britannica* established its sway over the Naga Hills.⁹⁸ It was a ritualistic practice considered to bring individual glory to a man and prosperity to his village in the form of good harvest or bumper crops, many children and hunting.⁹⁹

Often people are curious to know about the practice of head-hunting; even modern Nagas are quite ignorant about this customary practice. To the Nagas, head taking was considered to be equivalent to winning a trophy. To quote Horam: "it was that a young man, eager to prove his mettle, would long to take a head, bring it home in triumph to be feted as a warrior, gain the wearing of the coveted warrior's ornaments and having at last proved his worth and manhood, acquire a bride."¹⁰⁰

A person who did not have a single head to his credit had difficulty in getting a bride and became the object of ridicule with the girls, comments Randip Singh.¹⁰¹

Whatever be the motives behind head-hunting, the practice was bound up with the social, religious and economic life of the people. Each tribe had its own creed to justify this practice. It must be pointed out that head-hunting was carried out only from among the enemies of the village, and very often people of other villages or tribes were considered enemies in those days. Sex and age had no consideration. The only thing considered was that the victim should not belong to the same clan or family. The infirm or insane people were spared. The heads of women and children were considered more precious, because women and children were usually protected in the heart of the village and could only be killed through exceptional feats of courage. Some tribes did not slay women and children.¹⁰²

IV. RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

1. Belief in a Supreme Being

Prior to the advent of Christianity, the Nagas followed what is generally known as animism. Even today some of them still

follow this form of religion. Hence, they were traditionally described as animists. They believe in the existence of spiritual beings inhabiting the natural world.¹⁰³ The Nagas believe in the presence of supernatural power at the back of high mountains, flooded rivers, big trees and stones.¹⁰⁴

The Nagas generally believe in the existence of a Supreme Being who is the Creator and dispenser of all good things. This Supreme God is addressed in different terms by different tribes. For example, the Chakhesangs and the Angamis address the Supreme Being as *Uküminupü* and *Ukepenupfü* and God is also referred to as feminine.¹⁰⁵ Hence, *Ukepenupfü* is the mother of all according to the Angami Nagas. The Maos also address God in the feminine gender. The Supreme Being is addressed by the term *Amono Pfipei*, meaning our mother who gave us birth and our caretaker. This feminine dimension of the Supreme Being is significant. The Ao Nagas addressed the Supreme God as *Lungkitsungba* or *Lijaba*.¹⁰⁶

2. Belief in Spirits

The Nagas also believed in the existence of both benevolent and malevolent spirits. Every misfortune was ascribed to the evil spirits. *Ora kashü* or evil spirit is a Mao Naga term and they were appeased by offering fowls, eggs and other domesticated animals and by observing *genna*. The Nagas also believed in the protective function of the benevolent spirits. The Nagas once lived in constant war with each other and daily life was subjected to the fear of sudden attacks. This made them seek the help of protective spirits to guard them from destruction by enemies. *Gennas* were strictly observed. Animal sacrifices were also offered in order to gain the favour of these benevolent spirits that the village might remain safe.¹⁰⁷ Sacrifices were also made to the spirits in order to receive blessings for a bumper harvest, wealth and happiness in this world and beyond.

3. Omens

Traditionally the Naga animists were superstitious by nature. They consulted omens before embarking on any important project

like the starting of sowing the seeds, going on a hunting expedition or commencement of a journey.¹⁰⁸

The Nagas appease gods, but they have no idols and do not believe in image or idol worship. The religious beliefs of the Nagas differ from tribe to tribe. The various ceremonies also differ. The Aos attached some importance to certain stones, but do so without the idea of worshipping them.¹⁰⁹

4. Life after Death

Before the coming of Christianity, the Nagas did not have a clear idea of heaven or hell. The Ao Nagas believed that the dead go to the next world. Hence, one would say: "he has gone to the land of the dead."¹¹⁰ They believed that life in the village of the dead was similar to life on earth; those who were rich here were rich after death and those who were poor here were poor after death.¹¹¹ The Rengma Nagas held the same view. It is believed that when the souls reach the world of the dead after having refreshed themselves by food and drink offered to them, they find it to be an exact repetition of life on earth. They believed that the same men married the same women and so the same children too were born.¹¹² The belief of the Lotha Nagas is also similar. They believed that the land of the dead lies under our world. There the dead live exactly as men live here. Those who have done good deeds here being rich and happy and those who have done evil deeds being poor and miserable.¹¹³ The belief about the similarity between life on earth and in the next is very significant in that it is concerned with living a good life here on earth. However, the Mao Nagas believe in the existence of heaven which is the place a virtuous person goes to and becomes part of the celestial body like a star. The existence of hell is not known. It may be an indication of a positive attitude to life.

Despite variations from community to community, the Nagas believe that the soul of the person who dies a natural death goes to the land of the dead. All the Naga communities believe in a close link between the living and the dead.¹¹⁴ It is believed that

in spite of their supernatural force and power, the dead are still dependent upon the living for their happiness.¹¹⁵

We have given above a brief picture of traditional Naga religion which is still practised by a limited number of people of certain tribes. But it is a religion facing extinction in its traditional form. However, some of the values and attitudes of this religion are still prevalent and are practised in the present day even by Naga Christians.

5. *Gennas*: Practice and Significance

The word *genna*, derived from the Angami word *kenna*, meaning 'forbidden,' has become regularly used among the Nagas for the various incidents of a magico-religious rite.¹¹⁶ Holding or observing *gennas* is a common custom among all the Nagas though these vary from tribe to tribe. It may mean a holiday owing to village festival or due to an unusual phenomena like an earthquake, accidental burning of a house, eclipses or natural death, etc. It is also a prohibition of work or is also understood as a ceremony.

There are different kinds of *gennas* and they form an important part of the Naga life cycle. *Gennas* sometimes affect the whole village, tribe, or a group of villages, or a single household. On such occasions, no outsider is admitted into the house lest anyone should contact diseases and bring evil spirits into the household. Household *gennas* may also occur when some events take place in the house like sickness, or on occasions of sacrifices and some household ceremonies.

During the *genna* days people remain in their villages: no outsider may be admitted. In some cases the village gate is shut and no travelling or transactions take place.

In some cases *gennas* are observed when people erect stone monuments. The Mao Nagas have an elaborate system of *gennas*. Every month, there are *gennas* with specific reasons and significances. These *genna* days are known as *mani* or 'obligation days.' These days are days of prayer to God. Every *mani* or *genna*

day is announced by the king of the village on the previous night or early in the morning of the same day to the villagers. They are to refrain from field work or any other work.¹¹⁷

What is significant about the *genna* days among the Nagas is that it could be seen in terms of the sanctification of certain days or setting aside these days as sacred. Every religion observes certain days which may be called by different names like feast days or days of obligation. These days abound in India. *Genna* days for the Nagas may be equivalent to the numerous feast days and days of obligation in the Christian calendar or those of other religions.

6. The Naga Life Cycle Rites

The rituals and ceremonies connected with birth, naming, marriage and death can be defined as life cycle rites. From the day of his/her birth, a Naga goes through “various ritual performances, as a result of which he/she is accepted into various roles and status like that of an adult and ushers him/her as husband/wife through the performances of rites and rituals.”¹¹⁸ These rites and ceremonies may differ from tribe to tribe. We shall present the important rites of some of the Naga tribes.

a. Birth

Every Naga tribe attaches a great deal of importance to the birth of a child. This is shown by the fact that it is surrounded by a set of prescribed rituals and ceremonies.

First of all, the birth of a child in the family necessitates a family *genna* which means that the family concerned will observe a *genna*. Among the Mao Nagas, pregnant women are neither allowed to go to the field too early nor come back from the field too late. This is done so as not to expose the child in the womb to the evil spirits. Among the Tangkhuls,

the child immediately after birth has chewed rice placed in its mouth and is immersed in water heated nearly to the boiling point. This treatment is supposed to render the child hardy

and prevent it in after life from suffering from pains about the back and loins.¹¹⁹

Another significant thing among the Rengma Nagas is that "as soon as the child is born, the mother touches its forehead and says 'it is mine'."¹²⁰ In the Ao Naga custom, the child is washed and the father touches it with his left hand, and with his right hand puts into its mouth a little chewed rice saying: "I have touched it before the *tsungrem* (spirit). No *tsungrem* can seize this child."¹²¹

b. Naming Ceremonies

Much care is taken in the naming of a child. The day of naming may be different. It could be during the birth *genna* or soon after it. Many Nagas name the child on the third day. The Maos call this naming *sakapra* which means to bring out. A boy child is named by a boy and a girl child is named by a girl. Holding the child's hand and calling the name of the child, the namer (boy/girl) says: *kavali praleshe* (let us see the light).

The Angamis give very meaningful and significant names to their children, such as *Kevisse*, (arriving at a good time), *Vinile*, (keep good), *Viyale*, (let your share be good). The root *vi* (good) is common as in *Vibile*, *Visopra*, *Visatsü*, *Viponyü* and a host of others.¹²² The Sema Nagas also give very significant and meaningful names.¹²³ However, the names must tally with the social standing of the person concerned. The names of people of higher social status are like *Gwovishe* (victor), *Nikhui* (challenger). For the women, names like *sükhali* (peacemaker), *khezeli* (hostess) are given. Names of nobodies are like *zunache* (eyesore), *nachezü* (notorious debtor) for boys, and *mithili* (spurned), *pilheli* (gossiper), etc., for girls. If a person of lowly birth takes a name of great significance, the child might die.¹²⁴

The Rengmas name the child usually on the third day. A selection of names current among the clan is made; but it must not be that of a person who died an unnatural death. If names from the father's clan are not suitable (according to the omen), names from the mother's clan are chosen. Eventually, two names

are given to the child but the second name is not usually used.¹²⁵ For the Angamis, the second name is kept as a secret.¹²⁶

The Ao Nagas name the child the day after it is born, and ordinarily that name will be ratified on the next day when the ears of the child are pierced.¹²⁷ If the child cries too much on the first day, it is interpreted as meaning that the name given to the child is not suitable; so another name is given. The name must be chosen from among a dead ancestor and the name of a living relation cannot be taken, nor can the child be given the name of a former child who died young. If a child is constantly sick, it is considered to be a case of *tening mohok* (name unable: the child is not able to bear that name). It means that the child's name is too great for it.¹²⁸

c. Marriage

The next stage of life that is important for the Nagas is marriage. It is a social institution recognized by all the Naga tribes and marriage is generally for life.

The Angami Nagas have two forms of marriage: a ceremonial marriage which is very formal and an informal marriage, and both are equally binding.¹²⁹ However, divorce is allowed and is quite common too. Incompatibility of temperament is the chief reason.¹³⁰

The formalities connected with marriage vary from clan to clan among the Sema Nagas. However, in general, a formal betrothal precedes the actual marriage. This period may be from a few days to years. There is a bride price among the Semas. Usually the party of the groom will try to bargain and get the bride price reduced. If a woman is divorced because of adultery, she or her parents will have to pay a cow to the injured husband and if the divorce takes place within three years of the marriage, the bride price is returned.¹³¹

In general, it can be said that "unless physically deformed or an imbecile, every Naga marries. No man can set up house on his own without a wife, and every man, however poor, secures one."¹³²

Details of the marriage ceremonies and rituals may be different from tribe to tribe or even clan to clan, but what is common to all the Nagas is that marriage is an important social institution which is guided by certain rules and regulations.

d. Death Ceremonies

For the Angami Nagas, the first office performed after the death of a person is the washing of the corpse by a child of the same sex as the deceased.¹³³ On the other hand, for the Mao Nagas, a close friend/friends wash the dead. All the Naga tribes bury their dead. We have already discussed about the belief in **life after death**. Death has to be seen in the light of the belief, which is common to all the Naga tribes, that there is life after death and that the dead person's soul journeys to the **village of the dead**. Hence, provisions for the journey are prepared and kept for the dead person.¹³⁴ Those who die an unnatural death, like in accidents or violence, are not usually buried in the same place as the others.¹³⁵

e. Priesthood

There seems to have been no clearly defined class or clan of priests among the different Naga tribes. The Ao Naga is said to know "nothing of any priestly caste, or priesthood upon which special powers have been conferred by consecration. For the simple ceremonies of the home and field a man acts as his own priest."¹³⁶ For ceremonies which concern the whole clan, one of the clan priests is called in. These were old men whose qualifications were age, experience and freedom from serious deformity.¹³⁷ Hence, though there might not have been what we call professional priesthood among the Aos, there was some sort of priesthood existing. The same is true of the Mao Naga tribe.

According to T. C. Hodson, the *khullakpa* (village headman) is the village priest and the head of the household is the priest in whatever can be referred to as purely domestic worship.¹³⁸

Thus, priesthood among the Nagas was something flexible. The headmen of the village could be priests or function as priests: heads of the clans could be priests or heads of individual families

could also function as priests. The idea of women functioning as priests seems to be generally absent among the Nagas, but there were exceptions. For example, women can at times function as priests among the Mao Nagas.

V. ECONOMIC LIFE

Land and forest are the primary economic resources of the Naga people. The use of the land is not only to produce basic subsistence food for the people but also to produce surplus food. The ladder of social prestige can be climbed by individuals only by accumulating sufficient surplus produce to afford the lavish sacrifices and feasts.¹³⁹ In other words, it is not the economy of selfish and greedy accumulation of wealth but accumulation with the idea of sharing. This indicates that private property has a strong social dimension among the Nagas.

The Nagas are primarily farmers. About eighty percent of the total population is engaged in agricultural activity.¹⁴⁰ The two methods of cultivation practised among the Nagas are *jhuming*, sometimes known as the 'slash-and-burn' or 'shifting' cultivation, and the other method is terraced cultivation.¹⁴¹

'Jhum cultivation' is a method in which a piece of jungle is chosen, cleared of all trees and grass, burnt and then a variety of crops are grown over the ashes. The same plot is used for about two years or so and is then allowed to lie fallow for some years till the soil regains its fertility. Once one plot is allowed to lie fallow, another plot is chosen and the same process is repeated.¹⁴² Among the Lothas a piece of land is cultivated once in ten years.¹⁴³ This will also depend on the amount of land at the disposal of the village.

The second kind of cultivation is a wet cultivation in which terraces are cut on the slopes of the hills and water supply is carefully controlled through a system of canals and pipes. This system of cultivation is found mainly among the tribes such as the Angamis, the Tangkhuls, the Maos, the Chakhesangs, the Rengmas and the Zemis.¹⁴⁴ One possible reason may be that the areas inhabited by these tribes are more blessed with natural streams and springs of water than those of other tribes.

The main crops are rice, millet, maize and pulses. They also grow a variety of vegetables like cabbage, potatoes, tomatoes, squash, chillies, mustard, beans of various kinds, pumpkins, gourds, brinjals and others. The principal fruits found in the Naga regions are pineapples, peaches, plums, oranges, pears, guavas and bananas.¹⁴⁵

Although the Nagas are primarily farmers, other forms of economic production are also seen, e.g., rearing domestic animals. Buffaloes, mithuns, cows and pigs, dogs and chickens are reared for food as well as for commercial purposes. The larger animals like cows and buffaloes are tamed and harnessed for ploughing the fields,¹⁴⁶ thus contributing to the economic life of the people.

Almost every Naga village has its blacksmith, mostly engaged in making iron implements for the use of the village community. Pottery, weaving, basket making and other cottage industries are also seen. They also manufacture their own salt. The village society is so organized that the basic requirements of food, clothing and shelter are guaranteed to all its members. Thus, generally speaking, the Nagas are fairly self-sustaining and provide themselves well for their needs.¹⁴⁷

However, the fact remains that the Nagas are economically backward. In this regard, while commenting on the occupational structure in Nagaland, M. Hussain writes:

The poor development of industrial sector may be visualised from the fact that there is only one paper and pulp making factory and one sugar factory established at Dimapur. The absence of secondary sector may be taken as significant indicator of underdevelopment and economic backwardness.¹⁴⁸

Whatever be the economic condition of the Nagas, the traditional pattern of Naga economy seems to be changing fast, as J. Jacobs remarks on the present scene:

Trade was undertaken by women as well as men. Naga men and women work in large numbers as government employees... A very interesting scene of present Naga economy is, women's

engagement in business. A large number of Naga women run business, importing huge quantities of foreign articles from neighbouring countries.¹⁴⁹

We have noticed that agriculture and animal husbandry have been the basic occupation of the Nagas since time immemorial. The Nagas, including the educated ones and government employees, do not see agricultural manual labour as a noble profession. Right from childhood, they learn the dignity of labour.

VI. VALUES HIGHLY REGARDED IN NAGA SOCIETY

We have tried to give a glimpse of the traditional Naga society, their institutions, beliefs and practices in the preceding pages. We shall now attempt to highlight the values that underlie the traditional Naga life and institutions. Some of these values may not be unique to the Naga ethos but are highly visible and they typify the Naga outlook and mentality.

Some anthropologists and eminent writers have noted that by birth and by nature the Nagas are a sociable people. Sociability, hospitality, human geniality, honesty, bravery, reciprocity, hard work and self reliance are the major ethnic characteristics noted in the Nagas by those who have lived closely with the Naga people.¹⁵⁰

It is noted that the Nagas are a primitively simple people and they are generally hospitable and truthful.¹⁵¹ However, they become furious when they are offended or things do not go according to their wishes, as J. Puthenpurakal remarks: "Once a Naga is angry or depressed, it is indeed, very hard to move him ... a deep-seated spirit of vengeance may even turn his heart of flesh into a piece of flint."¹⁵²

Some human values which are outstanding and visible and highly regarded in Naga society will be dealt with below in a little more detail.

1. Community Orientation

The Naga society is community oriented. This strong community feeling had enabled the different tribes to survive for

so long. As we have seen, among most of the Naga tribes, the village acts as a unit in all matters and if anybody fails to attend a common function, he is fined. Thus, there seems to be but little room for any individualistic tendencies. However, it does not mean that the Naga society is opposed to the individual's own creativity. This would be an unfair assessment of the traditional community life.¹⁵³ It is not only the individual that has to give his time and energy for the welfare of the community but also the individual is amply rewarded in return in every way, especially in time of difficulty and misfortune. It is the village community and clan members who would immediately come to his assistance.¹⁵⁴

In Naga society everything is done in groups, says M. Horam. Thus, the arduous task of cultivation is lightened and made immensely enjoyable by groups of friends or families getting together, transplanting, weeding, and harvesting one field at a time.¹⁵⁵ This system of work in which a group of individuals (boys or girls or families) work together in each other's field by rotation is known as *ava* in the Mao language.¹⁵⁶

In such a society of strong community feelings, one has to be part and parcel of the village and one is expected to be faithful to all the community activities, such as the cleaning of the village area, roads and ponds.¹⁵⁷

One may ask oneself as to what the binding force behind this strong community feeling in Naga society is. As we have seen above, in the past, major villages tried to control smaller ones by force. Raids were carried out often and one's movements were often restricted. All these restrictions and dangers compelled the villagers to live and act as a single social and political unit. Thus the principle of oneness or unity must have become the underlying motivation in all activities, group or otherwise. In this regard, M. Horam is right when he says:

Whether it is food growing, herding cattle, building a house, the villagers share common interest and work for the general weal. We find in Naga society, therefore, that from the cradle to the grave every individual activity is motivated to maintain the membership of one's lineage and tribe.¹⁵⁸

Therefore, the social life of the Nagas is largely characterised by the traditional principles of co-operation and group activity rather than by individual activity.

2. Sense of Equality

The Naga society is basically a classless society where a man is respected for what he is and does, and not because he happens to belong to a particular tribe or clan. The status of women is equal to that of men. A woman is not a slave or a drudge but she is a companion.¹⁵⁹ Regarding this status of women, Haimendorf has this to say:

Many women in more civilised parts of India may well envy the women of the Naga Hills, their high status and their free and happy life; and if you measure the cultural level of a people by the social position and personal freedom of its women, you will think twice before looking down on the Nagas as savages.¹⁶⁰

Thus, a Naga woman enjoys considerable freedom; she participates freely in singing and dancing in groups during festivities, shares in making decisions and household responsibilities. She is never made to feel that she belongs to the weaker sex. "To consider every one as equal to oneself brings about the respect for one another"¹⁶¹ says Horam.

We have had a glimpse of the Naga traditional society; how it looked like in the good old days, where all men were equal; no high class or low class, no caste distinctions, no difference in religion, men and women enjoyed equal social status or dignity and no majority or minority problem existed, beggars were unknown. Every family lived in the village on its own right, possessed its house, built on its own land, cultivated its own land. They paid no land revenue, no property tax, no wine tax and no income tax. Cases of theft, if any, were exceedingly rare. There was no police, no armed forces, no jails. No family had ever been left by its fellowmen to the mercy of circumstances. Such was the society where the Nagas lived till they came into contact with the so-called civilised world.¹⁶²

There is no social discrimination because of wealth or lack of it among the Nagas. In fact, in the Naga society everyone feels equal to another.¹⁶³

M. Horam goes to the extent of saying:

Beggary is not only looked down upon but also considered a crime. Unlike the so-called advanced societies, there are no beggars, parasites and persons who live on alms. If because of some reason, a person has fallen into misfortune, he or she is looked after by the relatives or clans.¹⁶⁴

3. Village Brotherhood

The sense of brotherhood is very strong among the Nagas. Haimendorf narrates one of his experiences of the fellow-feeling for one another among the Nagas, during one of his visits to a Konyak Naga village where he found that even lepers were living and moving about freely in the village. He writes:

Even though the people were aware that it was a contagious disease, they could not think of isolating the sick members of the community. The kind-hearted Konyaks refused to exile poor sick members of the community, who said, after all, they are our brothers, how should we chase them out of the village?¹⁶⁵

The feeling of village brotherhood is expressed especially in the system of *chokhrokonghu* at the time of disaster or tragedy. *Chokhrokonghu* or *chokhrokasa* is a system of work where, on the request of a family, the fellow villagers give a helping hand on occasions such as making new terraced fields as well as repairing those fields which were destroyed by natural calamities. Generally, every family would send one or two members to work for the concerned family, and the family in turn would feed them for the day. Sometimes, rich people threw open such a system of work for the prestige attached to it, since it was a costly affair.¹⁶⁶

Intra-village brotherhood or fellow feeling is strengthened in a variety of other ways. For example, a man who has finished transplantation or reaping his own field would help his neighbours, and if any body had a good and surplus harvest, they were expected to give a feast to their friends and clan members.

4. Hospitality

One of the striking characteristics of the Naga tribes, as noted by eminent scholars, is their hospitality and cheerfulness. To be greeted with a smiling face while travelling on the road is a common experience. It is a fact that a visitor to a Naga village is heartily received and entertained with a surfeit of rice-beer, which is their favourite drink generally served at once by the lady of the house or her daughters.¹⁶⁷ If the guest refuses this drink, it would mean discontentment and dissatisfaction to the family members who wish to serve the guest to their hearts' content. Haimendorf shares his experience of Naga hospitality during his visits to their homes. He says:

I had hardly taken leave of my old man, with many gestures of thanks, when a neighbour of my host pulled me into his house. There the whole ceremony was repeated (offering rice-beer). On returning to the bungalow, the villagers brought me a cock as a present. It is a Naga custom to honour distinguished visitors with gifts of chickens and the refusal of such a gift would be a serious insult.¹⁶⁸

P. D. Stracey also shares a similar experience of hospitality: "To any but the strongest head and stomach, Naga hospitality can be rather overwhelming. In fact, a visit to any village by a stranger involves the acceptance of hospitality which often becomes embarrassing."¹⁶⁹ Therefore, inviting and entertaining guests are important features of Naga hospitality. J. H. Hutton, who had known the Nagas for many years, writes: "They are simple, cheerful, colourful, humorous, courteous and hospitable people." He further added that Nagas are people with a "sense of honour and generosity at home, at work and at gathering; laughter is the food of the society and hospitality is overwhelming".¹⁷⁰

5. Respect for Elders ¹¹

Respect for elders and parents was/is held to be sacred duty in the Naga society. "Age among the Nagas has both prestige and power because it is the older people who know and pass on to the

younger generations the ways of society to which they are expected to conform,"¹⁷¹ says Horam.

Elders in the society are respected especially because, as the Mao Nagas believe, such people are nearer to God and possess special powers and in their presence no evil spirit can harm anyone. Hence, the presence of the elders in any community is a consolation and a blessing on all occasions, especially in times of sickness. When sacrifices are performed, they are done by respected elders. Thus, one can never imagine insulting an elderly man or woman. In fact, the Nagas see God in their elders. On the occasions of feasts or other celebrations in the village, the share of the older people are never forgotten. When needed, the village community would support the elders by contributing a measure of paddy or by helping to build modest houses.¹⁷² The elders are a special group of persons in the tradition-oriented society. They rank higher than others, and are obeyed and respected. But their status is due to their knowledge of a wide range of rituals of politico-religious significance which they perform regularly for the benefit of the society.¹⁷³ However, the orders of the elders are obeyed only in so far as they are in accordance with the wishes of the community.¹⁷⁴

6. Democratic and Independent Loving

The most remarkable feature of the Naga life is the fundamentally democratic basis of their socio-political organisation. Hence, the keynote of the Naga character in general is independence. Everyone follows the dictates of his own will, a form of the purest democracy which is very difficult to conceive of as existing even for a single day.¹⁷⁵

In the past, the Nagas were a free people and so they were considered savage and crude. They lived in their own ways until the British annexed the Naga Hills. They had no sense of defeat and control. They were an independent and self-sufficient people.¹⁷⁶ They lived under the comfortable illusion that no alien was likely to penetrate their hilly strongholds, although the coming of the British had been prophesied in their legends long ago.¹⁷⁷

Even in later years, the Nagas held that they were different from the masses of the Indian people in all the fundamental ways of life, and lived independently in their village-states before the conquest by the British. Even the British really did not conquer them. They left the Nagas much to themselves. Therefore, they maintained that their inclusion in the Indian Union would be an artificial and forced one.¹⁷⁸

Though independent loving, a Naga will not misuse his freedom as pointed out by J. Puthenpurakal: "Though he is known for his sense of independence and individualistic attitude, no Naga will dare to take the law into his own hands."¹⁷⁹

The Nagas do not have a sophisticated form of government but a simple democratic way of life. Their politics is democracy in action. Everyone is a partner and has a say in the affairs of the society. Everyone participates actively in the decision making. Decisions are usually arrived at through consensus. Hence, Stracey rightly comments: "The free and independent outlook of the Naga people and their man-to-man attitude on most questions, was proverbial."¹⁸⁰

7. Self-Respect

The Nagas hold firm to the value of self-respect, and are generally very much conscious regarding the changes in the open world. Commenting on the Naga character of standing by their tradition of honouring their word, Randip Singh says that the Nagas are shrewd and intelligent enough to know ultimately, if not at once, where they have been tricked or trifled with. They have the strength of character and mind and village unity against palpable falsehood and hypocrisy.¹⁸¹

The Nagas have very strong views in favour of their own way of life and thinking. Hence, imposing upon them anything that is contrary to their thinking would be ineffective unless such a change is discussed and accepted of their own free will. Randip Singh writes in this regard:

Any project imposed or forced by the government on the Nagas would not work out successfully. It had to appeal to their eyes and reasoning by gradual demonstration and persuasion. It had to catch their fancy like that of a child, remove suspicions and prove to them ostensibly the beautiful character of a scheme before they can accept it. Being simple and primitive, the Nagas have a childlike curiosity and distrust and childish pride, obstinacy and boastfulness. One can therefore get the best out of him by guiding him tactfully on the right track and inspiring confidence in him; the easiest way to encounter is to win his affection by one's own right conduct, by not injuring his pride, by not driving him to the verge of obstinacy. The officials as well as social and political workers have to be an example in everything to him before they can gain his confidence.¹⁸²

In spite of the straight forwardness and high standard of integrity, the Nagas lack humility. They have a very strong sense of self-respect and would not submit to anyone riding roughshod over their sentiments.¹⁸³

8. Sensitivity to Others' Feelings

Only through intimate contact and repeated stay in their villages can one grasp the fine qualities of the Naga people. They are sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. Some eminent writers share their experiences among the Nagas. Haimendorf describes his experience of Naga sensitivity in glowing terms. He writes:

I was more dead than alive...not a leaf moved in the damp heat of the forest, and I had to stop more often to regain my breath while black spots danced before my eye. The path ascended now with greater steadiness and I soon found the uphill climb harder than the greatest fatigue alone would have justified. Some people coming up behind us realised at once what was the matter with me and without many words they fell in with our pace; I have never met more perfect tact. None of them had had any luck that day and now they were hurrying home, hoping at least to reach their village before dusk but

without a shadow of impatience they halted with me every quarter of an hour or so. In vain I tried to persuade them to go ahead - for, after all, I have Yongen to show me the way but they would not hear of it.¹⁸⁴

Milada Ganguli records her own experience. On her way to a Naga village, the jeep by which she and her companions were travelling over-turned. Some Nagas came to her rescue without being asked. She describes the scene thus:

I stood a short distance away among the women and silently counted the volunteers who had come, without any call or appeal from us and who did all in their power to help us in a difficult situation. There were thirty-eight of them. Where else in the world could we find such spontaneous willingness? Where else could people readily and cheerfully and without expecting any kind of reward come to understand such a difficult task?¹⁸⁵

CONCLUSION

We have tried to give a description of the traditional Naga society which comprises many tribes. Though no one is sure of the real meaning or the origin of the term *Naga*, it is remarkable that all are proud to be united under this banner. In fact, the various Naga tribes we have described, though possessing some common values, are quite different in many aspects of their culture, customs and traditions and languages.

The traditional Nagas are racially, ethnically and culturally distinct from the other races of India. They also hold dear, among others, the values of democracy, freedom and a sense of equality. They are also fiercely loyal to their tribe, clan and village. Their traditional religious belief, though built on the belief of a Supreme Deity (called by various names), was dominated by attempts to appease the malevolent spirits which were believed to be responsible for all diseases and calamities.

All these elements about the traditional Naga will enable us to understand a little better why he responded, the way he did, when he came into contact with Christianity.

ENDNOTES

1. Cf. A. Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas, A Historical and Political Study*, Vivek Publishing House, Delhi, 1974, p. 1.
2. Cf. Dusanü, *Nagas for Christ: A Brief History of the Formation of the Council of the Naga Baptist Churches*, Jorhat, 1990, pp. 5-6.
3. Cf. J. Jacobs et al., *The Nagas: Hill Peoples of North East India, Society and Culture and the Colonial Encounter*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1990, p. 9.
4. Cf. M. Hussain, *Nagaland, Encyclopaedia of India*, Vol. XIX, Rima Publishing House, New Delhi, 1994, p. 1.
5. Cf. A. Daili, *Nagas: Problems and Politics*, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, 1992, p. 5.
6. K. R. Singh, *The Nagas of Nagaland: Desperadoes and Heroes of Peace*, Deep and Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1987, p. 20.
7. Cf. M. Hussain, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 3.
8. Cf. Govt. of Nagaland, *Nagaland Tourism*, Nagaland Secretariat, Kohima, (n.d, n.p.).
9. Cf. P. Singh, *Nagaland*, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1972, p.1. Dimapur, bifurcated from Kohima district, has been recently created as the eighth district of Nagaland.
10. Cf. S. C. Bhatt, *The Encyclopaedic District Gazetteers of India: North-Eastern Zone*, Vol. 11, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 1997, p. 593.
11. Cf. K. S. Singh, ed., *Nagaland, People of India*, vol. XXXIV, Anthropological Survey of India, Calcutta, 1994, p. v.
12. Govt. of Nagaland, *Nagaland Tourism*, op. cit. (n.d., n.p).
13. Cf. S. Sen, *Tribes of Nagaland*, Mittal Publications, Delhi. 1987, p.1.
14. Cf. M. Hussain, *Manipur, Encyclopaedia of India*, vol XX!, Rima Publishing House, New Delhi, 1994, p. 1.
15. Cf. B. K. Ahluwalia, *Social Change in Manipur*, Cultural Publishing House, Delhi, 1984, p. 1.
16. Cf. M. Hussain, *Manipur*, op. cit. p. 1.
17. Cf. G. Watt, "The Nagas of Manipur," in E. Eiwin, ed., *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford University, London, 1969, p. 449.
18. Cf. R. K. Das, *Manipur Tribal Scene: Studies on Society and Change in Tribal Studies of India*, Series T 114, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi. 1989, p.5.
19. Cf. J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, Macmillan and Co., London, 1921, p. 5, (foot note 1).

20. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 5, (foot note 1).
21. Gate pulling is the solemn ceremony by which the people pull a huge wooden door, hewed out of a large tree and designed with beautifully carved images. Stone pulling is also a similar ceremony in which a huge stone is brought for the purpose of erecting it as a memorial to someone or an event.
22. Cf. Dusanii, *Nagas for Christ*, op. cit., p. 6.
23. Cf. *Naga Students Federation (NSF), for a United Naga Home*, Naga Club Building, Kohima, 1995, p. 4.
24. Cf. G. Kabui, *Genesis of the Ethnogenesis of the Nagas and Kuki-Chin*, The Naga Students' Federation, Kohima, 1993, pp. 5-6.
25. The division of Mao and Paomei is unfortunate. They are really one tribe with some minor differences in language.
26. J. P. Mills, *The Lotha Nagas*, Macmillan, London, 1922, p. 3; N. Yephthomi, "Early History of the Nagas," in A. P. Aier, ed., *From Darkness to Light*, NBCC, Kohima, 1997, pp. 1-28.
27. Cf. M. Hussain, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 26.
28. Cf. P. Singh, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 8.
29. Cf. J. P. Mills, *The Lotha Nagas*, op. cit., p. 3.
30. Cf. J. P. Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, Macmillan, London, 1937, p. 4.
31. Cf. J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, Macmillan, London, 1926, p. 6.
32. Cf. M. Hussain, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 15.
33. Cf. N. Ashuli, "The Legend of the Origin of the Nagas," in *Souvenir: St. Mary's Parish Silver Jubilee 1956-1981*, Mao, 1981, p. 54.
34. Cf. T. C. Hodson, *The Naga Tribes of Manipur*, Macmillan, London, 1911, pp. 10-11.
35. Cf. T. C. Hodson, *The Naga Tribes*, op. cit., pp. 13-14.
36. Cf. A. Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, op. cit., p. 38.
37. Cf. P. D. Stracey, *Nagaland Nightmare*, Allied Publications, London, 1968, p. 27.
38. G. Kabui, *Genesis of Ethnogenesis*, op. cit., pp. 9-10.
39. Cf. Govt of Nagaland, *Nagaland Tourism*, op. cit., (n.d., n.p.)
40. Cf. P. Singh, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 30.
41. M. Horam, *Social and Cultural life of Nagas: the Tangkhul Nagas*, B. R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1977, p. 22.
42. Cf. P. D. Stracey, *Nagaland Nightmare*, op. cit., p. 30.
43. P. Kullu, "Tribal Religion and Culture," in *Jeevadhara*, Vol. 24, no. 140, (1994), p. 98.
44. Cf. M. Horam, *North East India: A Profile*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1990, p. 181.
45. Cf. A. Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, op. cit., p. 15.
46. Cf. C.V.Füerer-Haimendorf, *Return to the Naked Nagas: An Anthropologist's View of Nagaland 1936-1970*, John Murry, London, 1976, p.13.
47. Cf. A. Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, op. cit., p. 15.

48. Cf. M. Horam, *Social and Cultural Life*, op. cit., p. 76.
49. Ibid., p. 77.
50. Cf. K. Ruivah, *Social Change among the Nagas (Tangkhuls)*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1993, p. 148.
51. Cf. M. Horam, *North East India*, op. cit., p. 181.
52. *Genna* is a prohibition or taboo. Its full significance will be clarified in the course of our work (see also appendix 1V).
53. Cf. L. Neli, *Christianity and Experience of the Nagas*, (unpublished B. Th. Thesis), Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, 1984, p. 3.
54. Cf. J. P. Mills, *The Lotha Nagas*, op. cit., 45.
55. Cf. M. Horam, *Social and Cultural Life*, op. cit., p. 77.
56. Cf. M. Horam, *Nagas: Old Ways and New Trends*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1988, p. 65.
57. Ibid.
58. Cf. K. Asholi, "Seminar on Modernisation in the Culture of the Maos," (unpublished paper), Manipur State Kala Akademie, 1976, p. 25.
59. Cf. M. Horam, *North East India*, op. cit., p. 178.
60. Cf. C. Jajo, *Christian Life in a Tribal Context in Manipur*, Swapna Printing Works, Calcutta, 1990, p. 13.
61. Cf. M. Horam, *Nagas: Old ways*, op. cit., p. 68.
62. M. Horam, *Social and Cultural Life of the Nagas*, op. cit., p. 65.
63. Cf. M. Horam, *North East India*, op. cit., p. 177.
64. Cf. M. Hussain, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 51.
65. Cf. J. P. Mills, *The Lotha Nagas*, op. cit., p. 23.
66. Cf. K. Maitra, *Nagaland: Darling of the North East*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1991, p. 33.
67. J. P. Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, op. cit., p. 49.
68. J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, op. cit., p. 179.
69. Cf. M. Horam, *Social and Cultural Life*, op. cit., p. 70.
70. Cf. N. Ashuli, "The Mao Nagas," *Mao-Maram Government Higher Secondary School Magazine*, 1973, p. 17.
71. Cf. M. Hussain, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 54.
72. Cf. P. Singh, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 33.
73. Cf. Sujata Miri, "Why tradition?" in B. B. Kumar, ed., *Modernisation in Naga Society*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1993, p. 14.
74. Cf. C. V. Fürer-Haimendorf, *Return to the Naked Nagas*, op. cit, p. 47.
75. Cf. K. S. Singh, *The Scheduled Tribes*, People of India Series vol. III, Anthropological Survey of India, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, p. 859.
76. Cf. J. S. Thong, *Head-Hunters' Culture: Historic Culture of Nagas*, Khinyi Woch, Tseminyu, 1997, pp. 26-35.
77. Cf. A. Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, op. cit. p. 31.
78. Ibid. , p. 32.
79. Cf. P. D. Stracey, *Nagaland Nightmare*, op. cit., p. 27.

80. L. Neli, *Christianity and Nagas*, op. cit., p. 6.
81. Cf. L. Neli, *Christianity and Nagas*, op. cit., p. 6.
82. Cf. M. Hussain, *Nagaland*, op. cit. p. 73.
83. Cf. K. R. Singh, *The Nagas of Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 32.
84. Cf. M. Hussain, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 68.
85. Cf. J. S. Thong, *Head-hunters' Culture*, op. cit., p. 20.
86. Cf. P. Singh, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 36.
87. Cf. N. Ashuli, "The Mao Nagas," art. cit., 17.
88. Cf. P. Singh, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 36.
89. Cf. A. Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, op. cit., p. 33.
90. Cf. J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, op. Cit., p. 345.
91. J. Jacobs et al, *The Nagas*, op. cit., p. 78.
92. Cf. J. S. Thong, *Head-Hunters' Culture*, op. cit., p. 22.
93. Cf. A. Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, op. cit., p. 33.
94. L. Neli, *Christianity and Nagas*, op. cit., p. 7.
95. Cf. N. Ashuli, "The Mao Nagas," art. cit., p. 17.
96. Ibid.
97. J. S. Thong, *Head-Hunters' Culture*, op. cit., p. 79.
98. Cf. K. R. Singh. *The Nagas of Nagaland*. op. cit., p.38.
99. Cf. P. D. Stracey, *Nagaland Nightmare*, op. cit., p. 30.
100. M. Horam, *Social and Cultural Life*, op. cit., p. 88.
101. Cf. K. R. Singh, *The Nagas of Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 41.
102. Cf. J. S. Thong, *Head-Hunters' Culture*, op. cit., p. 12.
103. Cf. M. Hussain, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 50.
104. 104. Cf. J. S. Thong, *Head-Hunters' Culture*, op, cit., p. 36.
105. 105. Cf. V. Epao, *From Naga Animism to Christianity*, Sanjivan Press, New Delhi, 1993, p. 38
106. 106. Cf. Takatemjen, *Studies on Theology and Naga Culture*, CTC, Mokokchung, 1997, p. 41.
107. Ibid., pp. 23-24.
108. Cf. P. Singh, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 181.
109. Cf. M. Hussain, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p.57.
110. J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, op. cit., p. 226.
111. Cf. Ibid., p. 231.
112. Cf. J. P. Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, op. cit., p. 171.
113. Cf. J. P. Mills, *The Lotha Nagas*, op. cit., p. 119.
114. Cf. J. Jacobs et al, *The Nagas*, op. cit., p. 85.
115. Cf. M. Horam, *Nagas: Old Ways*, op. cit., p. 16.
116. Cf. J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, op. cit., p. 190
117. The Mao Naga system of different *genna* days are given in the Appendix IV.
118. J. S. Thong, *Head-Hunters' Culture*, op. cit., p. 50.
119. T. C. Hodson, *The Naga Tribes*, op. cit., p. 142.
120. J. P. Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, op. cit., p. 201; and J. S. Thong, *Head-*

Hunters' Culture, op. cit., p. 50.

121. J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, op. cit., p. 265.
122. Cf. J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, op. cit., p. 218.
123. Cf. J. H. Hutton, *The Sema Nagas*, Oxford University Press, London, 1921, p. 236.
124. Cf. J. H. Hutton, *The Sema Nagas*, op. cit., p. 236.
125. Cf. J. P. Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, op. cit., p. 201.
126. Cf. J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, op. cit., p. 218..
127. Cf. J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, op. cit., p. 268.
128. Ibid., p. 269.
129. Cf. J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, op. cit., pp. 219-220.
130. Ibid., p. 224.
131. Cf. J. H. Hutton, *The Sema Nagas*, op. cit., pp. 238-242.
132. J. P. Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, op. cit., p. 205.
133. Cf. J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, op. cit., p. 225.
134. Cf. J. P. Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, op. cit., p. 216.
135. Cf. T. C. Hodson, *The Naga Tribes of Manipur*, op. cit., p. 147.
136. J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, op. cit., p. 243.
137. Ibid.
138. Cf. T. C. Hodson, *The Naga Tribes of Manipur*, op. cit., p. 140.
139. Cf. J. Jacobs et al., *The Nagas*, op. cit., p. 33.
140. Cf. K. S. Singh, *The Scheduled Tribes*, op. cit., p. 857.
141. Cf. M. Horam, *North East India*, op. cit., p. 165.
142. Cf. A. Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, op. cit., p. 20.
143. Cf. J. P. Mills, *The Lotha Nagas*, op. cit., p. 45.
144. Cf. J. Jacobs et al., *The Nagas*, op. cit., p. 37.
145. Cf. K. R. Singh, *The Nagas*, op. cit., p. 30.
146. Cf. C. Jajo, *Christian Life*, op. cit., p. 10.
147. Cf. A. Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, op. cit., p. 20.
148. M. Hussain, *Nagaland: Habitat, Society and Shifting Cultivation*, Rima Publishing House, New Delhi, 1988, p. 34.
149. J. Jacobs et al., *The Nagas*, op. cit., p. 40.
150. Cf. P. Dozo, *The Cross over Nagaland*, Zuve and Ato Dozo, New Delhi, 1983, p.6.
151. Cf. K. R. Singh, *The Nagas of Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 23.
152. J. Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions in Nagaland*, Vendrame Missiological Institute, Shillong, 1984, p. 6.
153. Cf. Sujata Miri, "Why Tradition?" art. cit., p.14.
154. Cf. M. Horam, *North East India*, op. cit., p. 185.
155. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 185.
156. Cf. P. Lokho, *A Study on the Customary Laws of the Mao Nagas*, (unpublished M. Phil. Thesis), North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, 1991, p. 152.
157. *Ibid.*

158. M. Horam, *North East India*, op. cit., p. 168.
159. Cf. Dusanü, *Nagas for Christ*, op. cit., p. 7.
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161. M. Horam, *North East India*, op. cit., p. 181.
162. Cf. Naga Institute of Culture (NIC), *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland*, Kohima, 1970, p. 162.
163. Cf. M. Horam, *North East India*, op. cit., p.184.
134. M. Horam, *Nagas: Old Ways*, op. cit., p. 40.
135. C. V. Fürer-Haimendorf, *Return to the Naked Nagas*, op. cit., p. 39.
166. Cf. P. Lokho, *A Study on the Customary Laws*, op. cit., p.151.
167. Cf. P. Singh, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 51.
168. C. V. Fürer-Haimendorf, *Return to the Naked Nagas*, op. cit., pp. 9-10.
169. P. D. Stracey, *Nagaland Nightmare*, op. cit., p.18.
170. J. H. Hutton, *The Nagas of Assam*, vol. 7, London, 1927, p. 40.
171. M. Horam, *North East India*, op. cit., p. 167.
172. Cf. P. Lokho, *A Study on the Customary Laws*, op. cit., p. 71.
173. Cf. R. K. Das, *Manipur Tribal Scene*, op. cit., p.87.
174. Cf. E. Epao, *From Naga Animism*, op. cit., p. 11.
175. Cf. S. N Ratha, "Notes on Naga Social Structure and Values," in B.B. Kumar, ed., *Modernisation in Naga Society*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1993, p. 30.
176. Cf. Dusanü, *Nagas for Christ*, op. cit., p. 13.
177. Cf. A. Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, op. cit., p. 72.
178. Cf. Milada Ganguli, *A Pilgrimage to the Nagas*, Oxford and IBH Publishing House, New Delhi, 1984, p. 21.
179. J. Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions*, op. cit., p. 6.
180. P. D Stracey, *Nagaland Nightmare*, op. cit., p.10.
181. Cf. K. R. Singh, *The Nagas*, op. cit. p. 58.
182. Cf. K. R. Singh, *The Nagas*, op. cit., p. 25.
183. Cf. P. Singh, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 5.
184. C. V. Fürer-Haimendorf, *Return to the Naked Nagas*, op. cit., p. 72
185. Milada Ganguli, *A Pilgrimage*, op. cit., p. 91.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NAGAS AND CHRISTIANITY: THE FIRST ENCOUNTERS

INTRODUCTION

The pre-Christian Naga society was one which hardly had any contacts with the so-called civilized world. The contact and the work of Christian missionaries are to be seen against this background. We shall briefly examine the initial encounter and the reasons for the positive response from the part of the Nagas. We shall begin with the experience of the Nagas in Nagaland and then those of Manipur.

This chapter comprises mainly three parts. The first part will deal with the arrival of the Baptist missionaries in Nagaland and Manipur and their encounter with the Nagas. Secondly, we shall discuss the arrival of the Catholic missionaries and their encounter with the Naga society. These two are treated separately because nearly a century separated them. The third part is on the methods of evangelization employed by both the Baptists and the Catholics. We have treated this together as many of the methods overlap. However, some methods particular to each are also indicated. Along with the arrivals and encounters, the difficulties, challenges and responses met by the missionaries are also discussed.

I. THE NAGAS OF NAGALAND ENCOUNTER CHRISTIANITY

The American Baptist missionaries came to Assam in 1836. Soon after their arrival in Assam, the mission to the Nagas became a subject of discussion and it was considered a matter of urgency. Major Jenkins, the then Commissioner of Assam, promised to

give the missionaries all possible personal help and official assistance.¹ Thus began the work of the Baptist mission in the Naga Hills.

1. The Arrival of the American Baptist Missionaries and the Initial Contacts

The first contact with the Nagas was made by Mr. Miles Bronson in 1839. He made a long visit of three weeks to the Namsang Nagas in the present Tirap district of Arunachal. People were suspicious about the visit of the missionary. It is said that Bronson took one whole day to convince the people that he was not a spy of the British Company.² The Nagas hardly had any contact with the outside world. Hence, they kept questioning Bronson on the motives behind his visit. Only when they were sure that Bronson meant no harm to them, did they admit him into their village and offered him hospitality.³ Miles Bronson established a mission school to teach elementary education and the Gospel to the Nagas. He persuaded them that education was useful and necessary. Bronson knew the Nagas more than any other European of the time. He urged the Government to have direct control over them. Bronson also had a passionate zeal for and devotion to the Nagas but his work was short-lived, because he had to leave the place due to the illness and death of his sister and other misfortunes that had fallen upon him. In fact, the work among the Nagas was interrupted till the arrival of another American Baptist missionary, the Rev. E. W. Clark.⁴

Rev. E. W. Clark came to Sibsagar (Assam), in 1869. He had a strong determination to preach Christianity among the Naga tribes. Hence, he was stationed at Sibsagar in order to begin the mission work.⁵ The mission was in contact with many Naga traders; a few of them had deliberately come to hear the Gospel. The pioneers who came into the field were Mr. Sobongmeren, a local Naga convert and Mr. Godhula, an Assamese evangelist.⁶ When the Nagas became friendly with Godhula, Clark encouraged him to pick up the dialect of his Naga friends and eventually paid

a visit to their village. In the course of time Godhula visited Molungyimchen more than once and earnestly began to prepare the groundwork for the planting of Christianity among the Nagas.⁷

The work was gratifying; for it is said that, in 1872, when he came down from the hills, he brought along with him a group of Naga friends, of whom nine were baptized by Clark in the Dikho river. Then, in December of the same year, Clark himself is said to have visited Molungyimchen and baptized fifteen more Nagas. This was how Christianity was planted in the Naga Hills.⁸

In 1876, Clark established his first mission station at Molungyimchen in order to preach the Gospel to the Naga tribals, and many more came to be converted. But Clark had to move away with his converts to a new place, to establish a new village solely for the Christians because of pagan opposition.⁹ And the new village came to be known as Molungyimsen.¹⁰

In 1894, the mission was shifted again to Impur. This became the centre of the American Baptist mission work in Nagaland. In the meantime, more Baptist missionary families joined the Naga mission and the work spread beyond the Ao Naga tribe.¹¹

The Gospel light began to spread among the Angami Nagas by 1878, through the efforts of C. D. King, the first missionary to the Angami Nagas. King established a church and a school at Kohima.¹² However, King's labours did not bear fruit until 1885, when the first Angami was converted. Later, when King had to leave Kohima, his successor, Dr. Rivenburg continued the mission work in the Angami area. He printed the first Angami booklets and opened a few schools. The mission work then spread to other neighbouring tribes like the Rengmas, the Chakhesangs, the Semas and the Zeliangrongs of southern Nagaland.¹³ However, till the end of the nineteenth century, many Nagas were without well-organized Churches. Only the Aos and the Angamis had well-organized communities. The progress of evangelization was a slow process till the end of the last century.¹⁴

2. Difficulties and Challenges

a. Difficulties faced by the Missionaries

It is a fact that all the missionaries, without exception, faced innumerable difficulties and obstacles in the initial years of their evangelistic activities. Opposition came from the people who often obstructed the spread of the Baptist mission work. The Nagas were quite superstitious about any stranger visiting their villages. They suspected that the white missionaries were trying to pollute the people and their customs and bring ill-luck to them. Children were frequently discouraged by the parents and the villagers from going to school.¹⁵

Clark was looked upon with suspicion because his teaching challenged the age-old customs. The new religion forbade the drinking of 'rice-beer,' sleeping in the *morung*, working on Sundays and participation in the sacrifices. These prohibitions were the very antithesis of the Naga way of life. This hostile attitude of the villagers forced Clark to move away from Molungyimchen along with his new converts.¹⁶

When the new converts moved to the new village, Molungyimsen, they totally ignored their old traditions. This caused, among the others, ill-feelings towards the new religion and hatred for its members. This kind of feud between the new converts and the others restricted very much the success of the early mission work in the Naga Hills for many years.¹⁷

Besides the problems already mentioned, Clark's mission among the Naga people had many other problems and difficulties such as poverty, the constant threat to life arising because of inter-village feuds, the practice of 'head-hunting' and illiteracy. This was the context in which Clark initiated a pioneering mission. The missionaries also found the Naga language too difficult to learn. Hence preaching was hampered.¹⁸

C. D. King also met with the same difficulty. In fact, he attributed his lack of initial success among the Angamis to the

difficulty of learning their language. He considered Angami language to be the hardest to master among all the Naga languages.¹⁹ The existence of a multiplicity of languages and dialects with their peculiar phonetics hindered the eagerness of the missionaries. So much so, Perrine wrote: “Here is our tower of Babel, our confusion of tongues and our great difficulty in spreading the Gospel through these hills.”²⁰

Most missionaries lived under conditions that were not conducive to physical or mental health. In such a situation, the increasing ill-health of some of the wives of the missionaries often compelled them to discontinue their mission work. We have the example of the Witters and the Kings. However, despite the poor living conditions, many missionaries served in the Naga Hills for many years.²¹

Problems also arose from the missionaries themselves which affected their mission work. There was disunity among the missionaries due to differences of opinion, especially over the question of total prohibition of rice-beer. The new converts too contributed their share of disharmony in the mission work.²²

b. Difficulties faced by the People

Initially, Christianity was bitterly opposed by the people in many places. The earliest Naga converts underwent untold persecutions for embracing the new faith. They had to face tortures and opposition, not only from the villagers but also from their own families and clans. Often the new converts were driven out of their villages, and even those who remained on were denied many facilities in the village.²³ Epao describes this fact thus: “In many villages believers were forced out of the village fortification making them found a new village.”²⁴

Thus, villages in many places were divided between the Christians and others. One such an example was that of Rev. Vilezu Rengma who was driven away from his village Tsemenyu and was allowed to establish a Christian village called New Tsemenyu.²⁵

Such persecutions were not uncommon in the early years of Christianity in the Naga Hills.

Looking into the Angami area, we see that their attitude towards the missionaries was very hostile in the beginning. Sanyu observes that those who consciously or unconsciously got converted to Christianity were persecuted or excommunicated by their Angami brethren from their village or clan.²⁶

However, when the Nagas realized that Christian missionaries had no motive other than to render service to them in the name of God, they (the Nagas) voluntarily offered themselves as converts to the new faith.

3. The Progress of Growth of the Church

a. Slow Progress

In the beginning of the American Baptist Mission, the response of the Nagas to the Gospel was quite slow. With the exception of the Sema Nagas, among whom a mass movement was witnessed, the progress among the Aos, the Angamis and the Lothas was very slow during the first forty years.²⁷ The slow progress of conversion among the Angamis may be due to their conservative and resistant nature to change.²⁸ It is noted that during Rivenburg's first term of stay in Kohima from 1887 to 1892 he made little or no progress by way of baptism, as it was only in 1896 that he baptized the first Naga.²⁹

When the first Ao Baptist Association was formed in March 1897, according to Mrs Clark's report, there were only twenty persons in the Church register.³⁰ This slow progress of the Church among the Ao Nagas must have prompted Anderson to comment: "Even though the Aos were the first to welcome the Baptists into the Naga Hills, the Semas were the most eloquent."³¹

One may wonder as to the reason behind the slow process of conversion despite the intensive mission work in the early years of the Baptist missions. As already mentioned, the interference of

the missionaries in the customs and traditions of the Nagas, and their coercive and compulsive methods made many Nagas indignant and they invaded the mission campus and manhandled even some missionaries.³² As a result, many new converts went back to their old religion.

According to available sources, there were also instances of the British officials coming into conflict with the advancing missionaries. The Britishers who were mostly Anglicans, Methodists or Presbyterians with their colonial cause and the American Baptist missionaries with their missionary zeal, were not always in good terms with each other in the Naga Hills.³³ According to one missionary: “the greatest difficulty which the missionary had to face was perhaps over-cautiousness on the part of the Government officials, as they were opposed to the missionaries.”³⁴

Hence, the slow process of the Church’s growth was partly due to the presence of certain British civil servants who did not get along well with the missionaries.

b. Fast Growth

We had mentioned the slow initial progress of conversion. There were only 211 converts in 1891 in Nagaland. The figure crawled to 579 in 1901. The number increased at a galloping pace in the twentieth century under the British patronage. As the years rolled on, the light of Christianity radiated to the distant corners of the Naga Hills.³⁵

The 1920s and 1930s saw a phenomenal rise in the number of Christians in Nagaland. By then the Baptist Church had taken root among the other Naga tribes such as the Semas, the Zeliangrongs and the Chakhesangs. In 1922, when the Nagas celebrated the 50th anniversary of Clark’s arrival, there were 5614 Christians in the Ao area alone with many thousands more among the other tribes.³⁶

Though the missionary activities were believed to have been discouraged now and then by the British colonial servants, Christian influence continued to grow beyond measure. During

the last days of the British rule and only after a decade of their leaving, the number of Angami Christians rose tremendously. In 1885, there was only one Angami Christian. By 1936, there were 1,534 baptized members. It rose from 2,882 in 1955 to 11,000 in 1981.³⁷

This tremendous increase in Church membership was the result of the long and painful efforts of the Baptist missionaries in Nagaland.³⁸ The difficulties under which they lived, the hazards they braved, and the unpredictable situations they faced are a saga of heroic missionary activity.³⁹

However, one cannot neglect the influence of the British Government officials in furthering the Christian mission. Despite the fact that there was never a close personal relationship between the Baptist missionaries and the British officers in the Naga Hills, we see the protective British umbrella that helped the missionaries. The government offered the missionaries every possible help and encouraged them to open schools in different villages. These schools played a very important role in the spread of Christian faith.⁴⁰ Moreover, the Naga Hills was earmarked for the missionary activities of the Baptists and they made full use of it.⁴¹

Indigenous leadership has grown very fast since the foreign Baptist mission was withdrawn during 1955-56. But even in pre-independence days, many zealous and devoted local Church men and women made great sacrifices for Christianity in the Naga Hills. In the words of Dozo, "one of the modern mission miracles is the rapid Church growth movements"⁴² in the Naga Hills.

II. THE NAGAS OF MANIPUR ENCOUNTER CHRISTIANITY

The first attempt to introduce Christianity in Manipur was made by the Baptist Mission of Burma as early as 1836. But it was not successful. The local people (the Meiteis) in the valley had already accepted Vaishnavite Hinduism as their religion.⁴³ Hence, until the arrival of William Pettigrew in Manipur, no useful contact was made with the people of Manipur in order to spread Christianity.

1. The Arrival of the First Baptist Missionaries

William Pettigrew was the first Christian missionary to arrive in Manipur. He came under the patronage of a British colonial official, A. Porteous, the acting political agent.⁴⁴ He came as a member of the 'Arthington Aborigine Mission Society,' but for some reason, shifted his allegiance to the American Baptist Mission.⁴⁵

Pettigrew came to Imphal in 1894. He was in his prime of life, just running 21, impatient to preach the Gospel.⁴⁶ He lost no time in preparing to equip himself for his life's mission. He wrote text books, printed them and taught them in a school he established. He was refused permission to open a mission centre in the valley but was given the option to go to the hills.⁴⁷

There is no clear information about what Pettigrew did during the first year when he had given up his work in Imphal in 1894 -1895.⁴⁸

There are two traditions of where Pettigrew went after being refused permission to work in the valley. One tradition says that he went to Senvon, a Kuki village (in what is now Churachandpur district) but was refused permission.⁴⁹ Another tradition says that he went to Songsong, a Mao Naga village (in what is now Senapati district). Here too he was not allowed to begin his mission. Hence, he went to Ukhrul area, among the Tangkhul Naga tribe.⁵⁰ Here he was not disappointed.⁵¹ Pettigrew was given a plot of land. He immediately learned the Tangkhul language, prepared text books in that language and taught the students in their own mother tongue in a school he had established.⁵²

Ukhrul became the centre from where the message of Pettigrew began to spread. Students came from all over the State and some of them were converted to Christianity.⁵³ However, the progress was slow. Twelve students were baptized in 1902, and there were 28 members in 1911. A church was built in 1902. This was the only church in Manipur till 1916.⁵⁴ As Christianity slowly began to spread, Pettigrew shifted his centre to Kangpokpi, a Kuki village, in 1919.⁵⁵ This was more accessible to people as it

is situated in the valley and on the high way. A middle English school, a leper asylum and a dispensary were established here.⁵⁶

Though the centre was shifted to Kangpokpi, Ukhrul was still maintained as a sub-centre and contacts with the neighbouring villages were kept up. Eventually the Tangkhuls became evangelizers of other tribes. Tangkhul evangelists were sent to the Somra Tract in Burma.⁵⁷

The second major group to respond positively to the Gospel was the Kuki tribe. The first Kuki Baptist Church was established at Tujangvaichong village through the initiative of Ngulhao Thomsong.⁵⁸ From 1920 onwards the Kuki Baptist Church grew rapidly and most of the evangelistic work was done by the Kukis themselves.⁵⁹ In fact, they also spread Christianity among other tribes. Ngulhao converted 334 Anal Nagas to the faith and another Kuki Christian, Pakho Sitlhou, spent most of his life in the service of bringing the Christian message to the Rongmei Nagas.⁶⁰ Some other Kuki evangelists also tried to contact the Nagas in Tamenglong area, but the language barrier made effective communication impossible.

The first Christian among the Zeliangrong group of tribes was K. Namrijinpau, a Rongmei. He was a man who had undergone all kinds of tragedies in his life. He was searching for something that would bring him peace. At this juncture, he met Pettigrew. He also met two of the early Kuki converts from the Ukhrul school. Finally, in 1914, he and his family were baptized by Fox, another American Baptist missionary.⁶¹ The next Rongmei convert was Ginlakpau through his contact with Namrijinpau. He, in his turn became an apostle in his village and converted nine families in spite of the strong opposition from the others.⁶²

The Mao Nagas were the fourth major group to receive the Christian faith in Manipur. As already pointed out, they had refused Pettigrew permission to open a centre in 1895.⁶³ But the breakthrough came in 1923 through the preaching of some Christians of the Tangkhul area. However, the real conversion took place through the initiative of some Mao students who were studying in

the Mission School at Kohima. The first converts were N. Kapani, N. Lokho and H. Kaikho. On returning home they became evangelizers and established a church in 1927. The elders of the village allowed the youngsters to remain on in the village, even going against the opinion of others who wanted them thrown out.⁶⁴

Christianity came to the Maram Nagas only in 1949. The evangelizers were the Mao Christians, Kh. Puni and H. Kaikho. The first village to receive Christianity was Tumuyon Khullen where thirty to forty youngsters wanted to become Christians. The village authorities threatened them with serious consequences and asked them to quit the village.⁶⁵ Accordingly they left the village and shifted to a new place called Duilong Pou and there they were baptized by the Mao evangelist, Lorho from Punnamai. From this first group of Maram Christians, the new faith spread to other villages of the Maram tribe.⁶⁶

This, in brief, is how the major Naga tribes of Manipur came in contact with Christianity. One significant point is that once the initial contact was made by the missionaries, the new converts themselves became evangelizers to their own people and other tribes too.

2. Difficulties and Challenges

Like their counterparts in the Naga Hills, the early missionaries in Manipur too had to face many problems and challenges. This can be seen from two angles: from the point of view of the missionaries and from that of the people.

a. Difficulties faced by the Missionaries

The Tangkhul Nagas were initially not interested in going to school.⁶⁷ Even under threat of punishment by the then Political Agent, Major Maxwell, the village chiefs were able to gather only 21 students for the mission school.⁶⁸ The few students who came were without any discipline. Their "behaviour was wild. Some sat quietly, some sat on benches, some read, some wrestled, some sang their national song, some came late and some went home at

will.”⁶⁹ This is an apt description of their behaviour. When Pettigrew tried to discipline them, he was the target of their wrath and they even surrounded the mission.

Another point of dispute was participation in the traditional festivals. The missionaries felt the need to draw up some rules regarding this but the people resented it.⁷⁰ Lack of proper road and communication facilities also contributed to the difficulties of the missionaries. Pettigrew used to take three days to reach Ukhrul from Imphal which is a distance of 83 kilometres.⁷¹

To add to all these problems, the missionaries also had problems of their own. Pettigrew and Crozier could never see eye to eye. Their personal differences made them divide the mission between them. Pettigrew took charge of the north-eastern region and the Sadar Hills region while Crozier looked after the north-west. This arrangement somewhat eased the tension but not entirely. Pettigrew worked mostly for the Nagas and Crozier for the Kukis. The relationship of the pioneer missionaries assumed tribal overtones.⁷² Another difficulty was the diversity of languages and dialects especially among the Naga tribes. Many dialects were spoken even among the people of the same tribe.⁷³

b . Difficulties faced by the People

Like their brethren in Nagaland, the new converts of Manipur too had to face many difficulties. Often they were forced out of their villages. As the Church grew, so too the opposition. The chiefs, actively supported by the Government officials, prevented the new converts from making churches. At the same time, they were prevented from leaving their villages to start new settlements.⁷⁴ In some places, the new converts were compelled to do forced labour on Sundays and those who refused were tried by the village court and fined. Unable to bear such treatment and similar harassment, many relapsed into paganism.⁷⁵

The mission movement among the Zeliangrong Nagas too never witnessed a smooth sailing.⁷⁶ One of the reasons was due to the activities of the ‘Kampai cult’ led by a Rongmei named

Jadonang. Originally it was a movement directed against the British for their imposition of an alien administration on the people, threatening their old ways of life. Gradually the movement directed itself against the Christians too, accusing them of betraying their ancient traditions.⁷⁷ Though Jadonang was arrested and executed after a violent rebellion, his cousin, Rani Gaiduiliu, revived the movement and the Zeliangrong church had to face a lot of difficulties from this movement.⁷⁸

The new converts of the Mao area suffered the most, even as late as 1949 when some Christians were severely beaten, stripped and tortured. A Christian girl was severely beaten and dragged by her own father while she was trying to escape from the village on account of her faith.⁷⁹

Among the Maram Nagas, there was a rumour that the white men were 'soul killers'. If anyone looked at the white men face to face, one would die. Or if the white men took photos of them, the soul of the person would be taken away and the person would die.⁸⁰

3. The Initial Growth of the Church

a. Slow Growth

The factors mentioned above did not favour the growth of the Church. In fact, it was a very slow progress. The Christians continued to live with their pagan brothers and sisters. Conflicts and quarrels used to break out between the Christians and the followers of the traditional religion especially regarding observances of village festivals, *gennas* and taboos.⁸¹ Lack of missionary personnel also hampered the growth of the Church. There was also suspicion between the missionaries and the people.⁸²

b. Rapid Growth of the Church

A turning point in Church growth was the year 1916. From this period onwards, converts increased rapidly year by year. Within six years there were nearly 3,000 members in 24 Churches. This extraordinary growth was attributed to the revival movement

from Mizoram (the Lushai Hills, then) in 1922.⁸³ However, missionaries were alarmed that the revival brought in mere emotionalism and a distorted idea of Christianity.⁸⁴ According to Downs, it is not solely due to the revival but because of the ground work done in Manipur earlier. In 1921 alone there were 1,000 baptisms.⁸⁵ By 1950, there were about 1,000 Zeliangrong Christians in Manipur⁸⁶ and a same number of Mao Christians.⁸⁷ In 1951, there were 68,394 Christians in Manipur. In the period between 1931 and 1951, the rate of growth of Christianity there seemed to have been greater than in any other part of the Northeast.⁸⁸

Downs is of the opinion that the rapid growth of Christianity in Manipur at this time was not solely due to the foreign missionaries but very much due to the native new Christians.⁸⁹ Pettigrew himself recognized the significant role played by the people of the area when he said:

There is something in their mental make up that urges them to go forward and in spite of barriers and persecutions even by their nearest and dearest, they preached the gospel, suffered persecutions from their village chiefs and elders and spread the news around wherever they may go.⁹⁰

III. THE ARRIVAL OF THE CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES IN NAGALAND

The first encounter of the Nagas with Christianity came as we have already seen, through the Baptist missionaries. The second wave of Christianity was brought in by the Catholic missionaries.

The first Catholic missionaries to enter the Naga Hills and who had occasional contacts with the people were Fathers Freyesman, Marcellinus Molz, Ansgar Koenigsbauer and Leo Piasezcki.⁹¹ However, the attempt to plant the Catholic Church started only during the initial years of post-independent India.

The first resident Catholic priest in the Naga Hills was Father Emmanuel Bars, a missionary of the Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB). He reached Kohima on 31 December 1948, as a chaplain

to the Sisters of the Society of Christ Jesus (SCJ) from Spain. Sisters Margarita and Guadalupe were sent to Kohima by Bishop Stephen Ferrando, the then Bishop of Shillong, to serve the sick in the newly opened hospital at Kohima, at the request of Sir Akbar Hydari, the then Governor of Assam. At the beginning, neither Father Bars nor the Sisters were allowed to do any missionary work other than their service in the hospital.⁹²

1. The Spread of Catholicism

Though the Sisters and their chaplain were forbidden to do any missionary work other than medical care, as the time went on, the radius of their influence widened and the number of their friends increased. Father Bars was a good photographer. Because of this, he had a good number of friends and he also made some useful contacts. On the transfer of Father Bars, his place was taken by Father Hubert Marocchino, another Salesian missionary. However, not long after the arrival of Father Marocchino, the period of service of the Sisters in the hospital came to an end and they were asked to leave Kohima.⁹³ This meant that Father Marocchino too was asked to change his residence from the hospital premises. Although there was opposition from the Baptists to the Catholic presence in Nagaland, Mr. Carvalho, the then deputy commissioner of Kohima, who was a Goan Catholic, helped Father Marocchino to stay on in Kohima.⁹⁴

In the mean time Father Marocchino made several contacts with the people in and around Kohima. Little by little he won over several persons to the Catholic Christian faith and the first Catholic baptism to be given in Kohima was administered by Father Marocchino in the Sisters' chapel in the hospital compound to a baby born in the hospital itself.⁹⁵ Thus John Keviprale, son of P. Keviprale, was baptized on 14 December, 1952,⁹⁶ and the father of the child was also under instruction to the faith and became a Catholic later.

During the twelve years of his stay in Kohima, Father Marocchino managed to build up a closely-knit community of several hundred Catholics in and around Kohima town. He also

established a few temporary chapels and schools for the people. When Father Marocchino was transferred in 1963, Father Paul Bernick was deputed as the resident priest of Kohima. Thus, Kohima was the centre from where the Catholic faith spread to the different parts of Nagaland.⁹⁷

The Catholic Church was started among the Lotha Nagas through the initiative of five men who were expelled from the Baptist church at Lakhuti, following a serious disagreement among its members.⁹⁸ Feeling hurt by the rough treatment they received from the Pastors and having come to know and believe in Christ, and not willing to go back to their traditional religion, these expelled members went to Golaghat (in Assam) to meet the Catholic Fathers there. They met Father Bollini SDB, who received them with open arms and instructed them in the faith. Later on, three of these visitors to Golaghat were baptized and accepted into the Catholic Church. These three Lotha Nagas were Chenisao Humtsoe, Yantrao Yanthan and Lhampano Humtsoe. These were Nagaland's first Catholics.⁹⁹ Entry into their own village was made difficult for those who became Catholics. Nevertheless, they had enough zeal and courage to face the challenges and oppositions from their Baptist brethren,¹⁰⁰ and seeing their zeal in the midst of trying situations, the number of Catholics began to increase.

In the meantime, Bishop Orestes Marengo,¹⁰¹ the new Bishop of Dibrugarh, saw a promising field among the Lothas and took personal charge of the Lothas until there was an urgent need for a full-time priest to guide the Lotha Catholics. To meet this situation and to further encourage the growth of the Catholic Church among the Lothas, Father John Larrea was put in-charge of the Lotha mission. Father Larrea moved to Golaghat and from there looked after the Lotha mission and in 1955, the Catholics in the Lotha area numbered 415. A plot of land was secured in Wokha, the district headquarters, to start a school. This in turn became a centre from which contacts were made with the Rengma and the Sema tribes.¹⁰²

Contact with the Zeliang people in Jalukie area (Kohima district) is inseparably linked with an informal conversation

between two friends, Mr. Nangangheing and Asiho Mao. The former was the then Chairman of the Zeliangrong Tribal Council and the latter was working in the Public Works Department (PWD) at Peren. Mr. Asiho had seen the good work the Catholic missionaries had been doing in and around Mao. He, therefore, requested Mr. Nangangheing to invite the Fathers to come and open a centre at Peren.¹⁰³

The providence of God dawned in the form of the new Catholic Mission on the Zeliang soil as the result of the initiative taken by Mr. Nangangheing who invited the Catholic missionaries to come and open Catholic schools in the area. In the last part of 1964, a zealous and enthusiastic young missionary in the person of Father Joseph Felix came to Peren. He was brought mainly with educational interest in mind. It was the first step. Slowly the seed of the Catholic faith took roots in the Zeliang soil.¹⁰⁴

The pioneering work in Tuensang area was done by Father P. C. Mani, a zealous diocesan priest. He and a group of the Sisters of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (SABS) took charge of the mission in 1967,¹⁰⁵ amidst much hostility and opposition from the people. Father Mani's gentle and affable ways soon won the hearts of the people and the mission was established.

Father Lucien Miranda (a diocesan priest from the Archdiocese of Bombay who had volunteered to work in Nagaland) and Fr. T. J. Chacko, another diocesan priest, made extensive tours to the towns and villages around Tuensang.¹⁰⁶ Fathers Liguory Castelino and Edwin Goveas, of the Society of Jesus, to whom the Tuensang mission was entrusted after the initial work of the diocesan priests, continued the good work. In 1972, the Jesuits handed over the Tuensang mission to the care of the diocesan clergy and moved to the southern Angamis and the Chakhesangs and established contacts with the people with Jakhama as the centre.¹⁰⁷ The initial contact with the Chakhesangs had already been made by Father Paul Bernick in 1964. He paid a visit to Zhamai village at the request of the people who wanted a Catholic centre in their village. This was the beginning of the Catholic faith among the Chakhesangs.¹⁰⁸

The Rengma tribe came into contact with the Catholic Church much later. It was through the preaching of Mr. Paulus Prale, an Angami residing in Tsemenyu.¹⁰⁹

Father Marocchino made the first contact with the Sema tribe when he visited Zunheboto in the early 1960s. But their conversion to the Catholic faith came a little later. The first Sema village to have Catholics was Lazami. Given below is the experience of Father John Med SDB, who made the first contact with this village:

It was in 1970. I was the Assistant Parish Priest of Kohima Parish. A group of people led by a leader of the Sema tribe came to Kohima asking the Parish Priest to send somebody to preach the Catholic faith to Lazami people. Since the Parish Priest had no time, I went to Lazami with the catechist of Kohima, Mr. Philip Sousalie. There, the leaders who had invited us were all Baptists. They had called all the people for a meeting in an old military "Basha." We came there and about 400 people, big and small had gathered. When I asked them: 'What do you want?' (This was my first question). They answered: 'We want to hear something about the Catholic Church.' They had heard that the Catholic Church was the best Church and they wanted to hear about it. Then I asked them the second question: 'Are you Catholics?' to which they answered 'Yes.' I continued to inquire of them: 'Are you baptized?' to this they said 'no.' Then I asked them again: 'So what are you?' "We are Catholics," they answered. There and then I started to give them instructions on the Catholic faith. I spoke to them in English; the catechist translated into Angami and the local headmaster (a Baptist) translated it into the Sema language. So three of us spoke simultaneously.¹¹⁰

Such experiences were not uncommon among the Naga tribes. People often invited the missionaries to open centres and to preach the faith to them. Once they decide to become Catholics, whether baptized or not, they declare themselves to be Catholics.

The first Sema baptisms into the Catholic Church were administered to 150 persons in 1970 and another group of 73 was received into the Church in 1971.¹¹¹ Contacts with Sema and other

tribes, especially the Ao and Konyak tribes, by the Catholic church started rather late and the number of Catholics among these tribes are few.

2. Difficulties and Challenges

a. Difficulties faced by the Missionaries

For the early Catholic missionaries everyday brought in new difficulties. For instance, Father Marocchino was prevented from constructing a church in Kohima,¹¹² and even the hut where he was staying was burnt down in his absence.¹¹³ However, undeterred Father Marocchino persevered and by the time he left Kohima in 1963, after twelve years of hard work, the Catholic faith had spread over several villages around Kohima.¹¹⁴

If ecumenism is still in its infancy now, it was not even born then. The project to build a Catholic church was opposed by the Baptists.¹¹⁵ Missionaries touring the villages faced the same opposition. Many villages had a rule that no one other than Baptists should be allowed to enter the village.¹¹⁶ This was the experience of Father T. J. Chacko in Tuensang and Mon areas.¹¹⁷ The main reason behind this opposition was the fear of losing their members to the Catholic Church. Father Devasia was explicitly told about this. He recalls: "In fact, one of the pastors had told me, 'don't steal our sheep from our fold,' and I said, I have not come to steal anybody but I have come to preach the true religion."¹¹⁸

The same opposition was meted out to the Catholic missionaries at the start of the mission at Peren (Kohima district). Asiho Mao (a lay man) recalls:

The Baptist leaders had not only opposed the establishment of such a Catholic school but also forced the parents not to send their children to the Catholic school. At the same time, they had started opening a parallel school, named "Baptist English School" at Peren. Besides many Baptist leaders strongly objected the entry of the Catholic mission in the Zeliang area.¹¹⁹

b. Difficulties faced by the People

The people who embraced the Catholic faith faced opposition on two fronts: from the Baptist and from the followers of traditional religion. There are numerous examples of how the Baptists opposed the new faith. The small group of Catholics in Kohima often lived with the fear of being driven out of their village or even ostracized from their society.¹²⁰ The people of Samjoram village (near Jalukie) received similar threats,¹²¹ and the Catholic chapel at Phungre was pulled down.¹²²

The Baptists felt that the Catholic Church was an intruder. Some Catholics even underwent imprisonment in a small dark trench for 93 days.¹²³ However, no amount of torture and persecution could make the Catholics betray their new found faith. They proclaimed it all the louder.

Opposition to the Catholic Church also came from the followers of the traditional religion. The Catholic community of Kheruma village was not allowed to build a church in the village. The villagers believed that if a church were built and its bells rung, it would bring ill luck to the village. Hence, the church had to be built outside the village.¹²⁴ These are only a few examples of how the first Catholics among the Nagas faced opposition and persecution.

3. The Growth of the Church

In spite of the heroic sacrifices and zeal of the first Catholic missionaries, the growth of the Catholic Church among the Nagas of Nagaland was painfully slow. Besides the reasons already mentioned, Nagaland has also a very difficult terrain. There were hardly any roads in those days, and most of the touring had to be done on foot and it was next to impossible for the few missionaries to cover the whole area and evangelize. Bishop Marengo's experience is illustrative of the difficulty:

"I crawled with my hands and feet the steep hill and I really don't know how I managed to reach the summit."¹²⁵

An important factor in the growth of the Church was the role of the laity, who were mainly responsible for the establishment

of the Church in many villages.¹²⁶ It was they who invited the missionaries to their villages and helped the communities sprout and grow in the faith. When missionaries of foreign origin could not move about freely and visit the Catholic communities, as they were required to obtain an Inner-line permit which was sometimes difficult to get, it was the laity who nurtured the faith of the communities and kept it alive. Because of this, Church membership continued to grow even without the presence or visit of a priest.¹²⁷

Though the Catholic mission does not seem to be making any headway among some of the Naga tribes, like the Rengmas and Semas, nevertheless it is growing year by year. In these nearly 50 years of Catholic presence (the first Catholic missionaries entered Nagaland in 1948), the number of Catholics has grown to over 36,941.¹²⁸ It may not look phenomenal but considering the difficulties and oppositions it faced, it is admirable, and it is still growing.

IV. THE ARRIVAL OF THE CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES AND THE INITIAL ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH IN MANIPUR

The coming of the Catholic faith to Manipur is a very recent one. The first Catholic missionary to visit Manipur was Father Ansgar Koenigsbauer, a priest of the Society of the Divine Saviour (SDS) or commonly known as the 'Salvatorians.' He visited Imphal in 1912.¹²⁹ Father Koenigsbauer was graciously received by the Raja of Manipur and given permission to open a Catholic Mission at Imphal. But unfortunately, the Assam Mission, with its limited resources, both in terms of personnel and finance, could not follow up with any concrete action the very positive initial step taken by Father Koenigsbauer.¹³⁰

1. Missionaries Invited to Manipur

The next contact of the Catholic missionaries with Manipur came much later, in October, 1947, when Fathers Marengo and Colussi visited Imphal and a few villages in the hills.¹³¹

It all began with the conversion of Phanitphang Hongray, a Tangkhul Naga from Ukhrul in Manipur. He was a student of Don Bosco School, Dibrugarh, Assam, during the years 1940-1942. He was converted to Catholicism and baptized on 15th August, 1942, the first Tangkhul Catholic and probably the first person from Manipur to be baptized a Catholic.¹³² His companions, Haorei and A. S. Lungshi too were later received into the Catholic Church. It was they who took the initiative, got permission from the Raja of Manipur and invited the Fathers to visit Manipur. Though he gave them a sympathetic ear, the Raja of Manipur did not allow the Catholic missionaries to preach among the Meiteis of the valley but only among the tribals of the hills.¹³³ Accordingly, the two missionaries proceeded to Ukhrul and the people received them cordially, and the possibility of bringing the light of the Catholic faith to the area was clearly visible.¹³⁴

2. The First Catholic Community

The Baptist Church in Hundung was a divided Church in 1946. This gave an occasion for the Catholic Church to come in. The initiative was taken by Dominic Shomi. He was by then already a Catholic and studying in Shillong.¹³⁵ The breakaway group met Dominic Shomi and wanted to become Catholics too.¹³⁶ At their request Dominic Shomi wrote to Bishop Ferrando of Shillong, requesting him to send a priest to instruct them in the faith.¹³⁷ Bishop Ferrando in turn directed Father Marocchino, the resident chaplain of the Sisters at the hospital in Kohima to visit Hundung.¹³⁸ He reached Hundung on 10th February, 1952 and the following day, 33 families with 350 members were baptized and received into the Catholic Church.¹³⁹ This community was the first to be received into the Catholic Church in Manipur. However, there were already communities of Catholics among the Kuki and Zou tribes of Sugnu area (south west of Manipur, bordering the Chin Hills of Burma). These had migrated from the Chin Hills during the Second World War. These Catholic communities were discovered by the Catholic missionaries who came to Manipur.¹⁴⁰

3. The First Mission Centre at Imphal

Active missionary work began in Manipur only after the erection of the new Diocese of Dibrugarh in 1951 and the consecration of its first Bishop, Orestes Marengo, on 18th May, 1952.¹⁴¹ Manipur and Nagaland were included in the new diocese. Bishop Marengo and Father A. Ravalico,¹⁴² secretary to the Bishop, made their first extensive tour of Nagaland and Manipur in 1953, confirming the few already existing Catholics and converting many more in the two states.

The next missionary to join the band of pioneers was Father Peter Bianchi, in 1955. Till this time the missionaries had to come all the way from Dibrugarh, about 600 kilometres, to visit the Catholics in Manipur. Bishop Marengo thought it necessary to open a mission station at Imphal¹⁴³ for the spread of the Catholic faith. With this in view, Bishop Marengo sent Fathers Ravalico and Bianchi to Manipur on 5th March 1956 and the missionaries reached Imphal, the capital of Manipur on 6th March, the 50th birthday of Father Ravalico.¹⁴⁴ They were the first Catholic missionaries who came to officially open the first Catholic mission in Manipur. For a time they lived in a rented house. Then they bought the house of a police officer who was on transfer in the heart of Imphal and renamed it *Nirmalabas*, (House of the Immaculate Conception). Eventually they bought a plot of land and established the Don Bosco Youth Centre in the same year and children from different tribes began to flock to the new centre.¹⁴⁵ Henceforth, Don Bosco Youth Centre became the nerve centre of the Catholic mission in Manipur.

4. Spread of the Church: Missionaries Invited Everywhere

St. Paul's vision of being called to Macedonia, "Come over to Macedonia and help us"(Acts 16: 9), seems to have been the experience of the first Catholic missionaries in Manipur. As soon as they knew that the missionaries had come to stay in their land, invitations and delegations of people were constantly coming in from different parts of the state.

We have mentioned earlier that Catholic communities of Kukis and Zous were already in the Sugnu area, and the Tangkhul area too had Catholic communities before the missionaries opened the centre at Imphal. The Catholic Church was non-existent in the rest of the state.

When the people of Taosang (Tamenglong area in the north west of Manipur) heard about the Catholic Church, the elders had a long discussion and, after clearing up all their misgivings, they invited the Catholic missionaries to come and instruct them in the faith.¹⁴⁶ Through the instrumentality of a certain person named Dindu Golmei, the people of Dailong village came to know about the Catholic Church. Dindu himself brought Father Bianchi to Dailong to preach the faith and a number of youngsters were baptized.¹⁴⁷ At the earnest invitation of the people, Fr. Bernick came to Oinamlong village where a number of them were given instruction and baptized.¹⁴⁸ The people of Mongjarong Khunou village also got permission to call the Catholic missionaries to preach and a number of youngsters were baptized. The same happened to the people of L. Khullen.¹⁴⁹ The people of Awangkhul village became Catholics in the following manner. A number of them were excommunicated from the Baptist Church membership for drinking rice-beer. This gave an occasion for them to look towards the Catholic faith. A delegate was sent to find the Catholic Fathers and after a number of visits to Imphal, about 30 families embraced the Catholic faith.¹⁵⁰ Father Joseph Felix, one of the pioneer missionaries of the area, gives a vivid description of the eagerness of the people for the new faith:

After two or three days of climbs and hardships I was finally rewarded with the sight of my life - two endless lines of eager faces of welcome. The sizeable church of thatch and bamboos was packed to capacity - some 300 neophytes waiting for the bread of the word to be broken to them.¹⁵¹

The spread of the Catholic Church among the Mao Nagas too was through the instrumentality of some enthusiastic students from Punanamei village, like S. Asiho, K. Kreho, and P. Daili, who were studying at Imphal. According to Asiho: "It may be inciden-

tally or due to the compelling situation prevailing or rightly due to the providence of God.”¹⁵²

It was in 1956 that these students met Father Bianchi and invited him to their village. Not long after this first meeting, the students again met Father Bianchi and told him that many were willing to become Catholics. Accordingly, Father Bianchi visited their village and after many hours of discussion, many elders and youngsters registered their names to be baptized Catholics. This was the beginning of the Catholic faith among the Mao Nagas. From the Mao area the “flame of faith” spread to the Paomei and Chülivei areas.¹⁵³

In 1957, Bishop Marengo visited the place and was convinced of the bright future prospects of the Church there and a church was built for the ever growing community. Father Bianchi took up his residence there at Punanamei in 1969 to cater better to the needs of the people.¹⁵⁴

The Catholic faith came to the Maram Nagas in the following way. A group of Maram Khullen people had decided to become Christians. They approached a certain John, a Tangkhul who was a teacher in the village and asked his opinion as to whether they should become Baptists or Catholics. Mr. John, though a Baptist himself, exhorted them to become Catholics. So a delegation was sent to Imphal to invite the Catholic priests to their village. Fathers Ravalico and Bianchi visited their village and found a good number of men and children eager to learn about the new faith and get baptized. Thus the Catholic Church was born in the Maram area.¹⁵⁵

The spread of Catholicism to the southern part of Manipur among the Moyon and Monsang Nagas was due to the initiative of Nungchim Angchreh of Mitong village (near Chandel) and his cousin Nungchim Darnong. Father Ravalico paid his first visit to their area (Chandel) in 1954. After this visit, Father Ravalico picked up Ng. Darsong, Ch. Rungtha and Ningvar and entrusted them to the care of Father Cerato in Naharkatia to learn about the Bible and to pursue their studies. Ch. Rungtha, being already a

married man, returned after five months because of domestic problems. The other three, namely, Darnong, Ningvar and Darsong received baptism on 24th December, 1955. These were the first baptisms from the Moyon tribe.¹⁵⁶ In 1956, a number of other Naga tribes of the area like the Lamkangs, the Marings, the Monsangs, etc., entered the Catholic fold.¹⁵⁷

In the early days of the Catholic Church in Manipur, people sought after the missionaries with eagerness. They longed to hear about the Catholic faith. In the words of Father Bianchi: "Every now and again representatives from different areas would come and invite the Fathers to pay a visit to their villages."¹⁵⁸ The only problem was the scarcity of the missionaries.

5. Difficulties and Challenges

a. Difficulties faced by the Missionaries

Lack of transport and communication facilities was a great hurdle for the missionaries. The multiplicity of languages also was a great problem as well as a challenge for the missionaries.

The hostile attitude of some people in certain areas also posed problems to the missionaries. There were many instances of this.

Father P. C. Mani had gone to a village in Tangkhul area at the invitation of some students. As he entered a house, a man appeared, brandishing a knife. The house was surrounded by many baptists and the missionary was warned against the staying in the village. However, the owner of the house rescued him and gave him shelter in his house.¹⁵⁹ On another occasion, Father Bianchi and his companions were about to be beaten up. Father Bianchi also was pulled out of a church at Hundung by the Protestants.¹⁶⁰ Father Ravalico and Bishop Marengo were showing a religious film in Komlathabi village, near Pallel, when they were attacked, their projector was damaged and they sustained injuries.¹⁶¹ The missionaries were often forbidden to enter certain villages which were considered to be the strongholds of the Baptists. In the face

of such and many other difficulties, the missionaries did not give up but persevered. Gradually many of these difficulties were overcome with their spirit of sacrifice and dedication. Today, the Church of Manipur has still to learn about fostering an ecumenical atmosphere.

b. Difficulties faced by the People

Like their missionaries, the new converts too had to undergo many sufferings at the hands of their own people, villages and even relations. A young man named Peter Thangchinlang, from the Chin Hills, (Myanmar) who migrated to Manipur during the Second World War, was a very zealous preacher. He went to preach about the Catholic Church in a village called Lonpi, near Sugnu. He was arrested and tied with a rope to a cross made for him, ridiculed, beaten and then left to the mercy of the pouring rain and the cold, until a kind woman came and rescued him. This was the price he had to pay for preaching fearlessly the Good News to the people of Lonpi.¹⁶²

Another enthusiastic young boy, named Thuinganing, paid the price with his life. This boy was trying to gather his friends in order to establish the Catholic Church in his village, Ngari. But jealousy and hatred surged in the hearts of his own Baptist brethren. They could not tolerate his idea of planting the Catholic Church in the village. So one day, when Thuinganing was in a house with his friends, discussing and learning prayers, a group of well-armed men came in and surrounded the house. Thuinganing and his friends were taken out of the village and asked to deny their new found faith. On their refusal, the leader Thuinganing was shot. He was shot dead for being a Catholic.¹⁶³ Often blood relationships were severed because of the faith. For the tribals who value blood and kinship relations, these experiences were shattering. But many of the new converts remained undaunted. The waters of baptism became thicker and stronger binding forces than the relations of blood. Now more than at any other time in their history, the people of Manipur, especially the Catholics, need to renew this bond and

to show to all that faith is stronger than any other bond. This is the challenge to every Christian, and to every missionary.

V. MISSIONARY METHODS

God has a thousand ways to communicate his love to the people who are ignorant of him. The early missionaries made use of every available means to preach the Gospel to the Nagas.

1. Methods Common to Baptists and Catholics

a. The Study of the Local Language

The learning of the local language was extremely effective in the mission work. Rev. Clark and other early missionaries in the Naga Hills understood the importance of learning the language of the Naga tribes in order to be successful in their mission work. Hence, they not only mastered the different languages of the different Naga tribes, but also, committed them to writing. As Puthenpurakal puts it: "It was all the more imperative, because in the whole structure of the Baptist evangelization work, both the spoken and the written word played a major role."¹⁶⁴ In fact, it is said that the Arthington missionaries started learning the languages in their respective camps even before they entered the actual mission fields of Manipur and Lushai Hills.¹⁶⁵ Pettigrew learned Manipuri and found a way to enter Manipur.¹⁶⁶ He was able to master about a dozen languages, including Hindi, Bengali, Manipuri and later Tangkhul.¹⁶⁷

A number of the pioneer Catholic missionaries also realized the importance of learning the local languages. Outstanding among them was Bishop Marengo. His exceptional ability to pick up languages, fourteen of them, drew many people to him during his visits.¹⁶⁸ Other pioneers, whose knowledge of the local languages was instrumental in their effectiveness, were Frs. John Larrea, Roland O'Hara, Michael Mundathanathu, Devasia Kollenkunnel, in Nagaland, and Frs. Joseph Felix, Peter Bianchi, George Venturoli,

Matthew Planthottam, Joseph Kachiramattam and Mani Parenkulangara in Manipur. However, no systematic study of the local languages was undertaken by Catholic missionaries.

Talking in the language of the people makes things different. The feeling of strangeness and distance towards the missionaries gave way to friendship and love. That was how the Assamese evangelist, Godhula, was able to convey the Gospel story to the Nagas. As they became familiar with him, he was given the freedom to preach to every person in the village.¹⁶⁹

Therefore, whenever the missionaries began a mission station, their first preoccupation was the study of the local language, so as to penetrate into the hearts of the Naga animists with the Gospel message.

b. Schools and Boarding Houses

Though the primary objective of the mission was to spread the teachings of the Christian religion among the Naga people, Clark himself soon realized that it was only through the opening of schools that access could be obtained to new villages.¹⁷⁰ With this aim in view, he imparted education to as many boys and girls as were available to him.¹⁷¹ When those who had received education were found fairly well-prepared to teach others, they were sent to the villages to teach as well as to preach the principles of the Christian religion. Nearly all the Christians of the early years were students of the schools.¹⁷²

In the course of a few years, village schools and boardings became the chief forum of evangelization among the Nagas.¹⁷³ All the other missionaries too recognized school work as the “most effective means” for establishing the Kingdom of God among the Nagas and the students as the best way to get the Gospel into the villages.¹⁷⁴ What Clark did in Nagaland, Pettigrew did in Manipur. The first thing he did, on his arrival in Ukhrul, was to start a school.¹⁷⁵ He was not interested in secular education for its own sake. He wanted to further the cause of Christianity through the teaching of Scriptures and Christian hymns which he himself had

prepared. The mission school at Ukhrul gave Pettigrew the first converts and it was a launching pad to other areas.¹⁷⁶ In fact, students who got converted at Ukhrul mission school, returned to their own places, started similar schools and imparted both education and the Gospel.¹⁷⁷

The Catholic missionaries too realized that schools and boarding houses were the most effective means of contacting people. Hence, from the very beginning, Father Marocchino opened some schools in Kohima.¹⁷⁸ The “Little Flower” and ‘Christ King’ schools in Kohima were started in 1965 and 1969 respectively to meet the educational needs of the people as well as for the purpose of furthering the cause of the mission.¹⁷⁹

In Manipur, ‘Don Bosco Youth Centre,’ Imphal, which was a school-cum-boarding became the centre and training ground for the young church. The students that came out of that institution became missionaries in their own villages, among their own tribes. During the holidays, the boys who had been instructed and baptized in the boarding, instructed others in the faith.¹⁸⁰ Opening schools in villages also often led people to accept the faith.

Today, if the literacy rate of Nagaland is higher than that of the national average,¹⁸¹ it is thanks to the early missionaries, both Baptist and Catholic. We do not have a separate statistics for the Nagas of Manipur, but it can be definitely said that they too received initiation into modern education due to the pioneer missionaries. Schools, then, were really a means for the spread of Christianity. Thus school work formed a very important part of missionary programme.

c. Medical Service

Clark had foreseen the great utility of medical work in furthering the missionary cause and accordingly, he made a request for a qualified medical missionary. The first full-time medical missionary among the Aos was Dr. Bailey.¹⁸² In Manipur too, Pettigrew saw the need for medical service. Hence, he requested for a medical doctor and Dr. Crozier was sent and a Mission

Hospital was established at Kangpokpi¹⁸³ which still continues to serve the people.

Help given to the villagers in the form of medicine was appreciated and it went a long way towards winning their confidence. People from far off places came to the missionaries for treatment, while they were also given a dose of Christianity.¹⁸⁴ Seeing the effectiveness of medicine to win souls, the earlier missionaries even dispensed medicine without necessary medical training. In appreciation of such medical services rendered to the Nagas, many of them embraced Christianity.¹⁸⁵

The first Catholic missionaries set foot on the Naga soil in order to give medical service. As already pointed out, the Sisters of the Society of Jesus¹⁸⁶ and their chaplain, Fr. Emmanuel Bars, were not allowed to evangelize but were welcomed and appreciated for their medical service.¹⁸⁷ They used medical service as a means of evangelization. Today, the diocese of Kohima runs a hospital and 20 dispensaries with about 60, 000 beneficiaries.¹⁸⁸

In Manipur also, some of the pioneer missionaries were permitted entry into the villages to preach because of a little medical service.¹⁸⁹ Like in Nagaland, the Catholic missionaries in Manipur also catered and are catering to the medical needs of the people. Today, the Archdiocese of Imphal runs two Hospitals and 23 dispensaries.¹⁹⁰

d. Bible Translation and Literary Work

The missionaries learnt some of the Naga languages and translated the Bible, Christian hymns and other religious works into the Naga vernaculars, using the Roman script.¹⁹¹ Clark was very much aware of the necessity of committing the Naga languages to writing because the Baptist method of evangelization, based itself mainly on the written word, demanded that something had to be produced in print to assure consistency in preaching.¹⁹² Thus, he compiled the Ao Naga dictionary, a catechism, a hymn book, and translated the Gospels according to Matthew and John. Literature is considered the wheel of communication. The missio-

naries never lost sight of the importance of the print media.¹⁹³ The work of the mission in Manipur went side by side with the work on Christian literature. It was the early missionaries who gave a written literature to many tribes by adopting the Roman script for them.¹⁹⁴ Schools in the plains did not allow the teaching of religion but copies of the scripture were given to the students as literature.¹⁹⁵

Translation and printing of catechism and prayer books into the local languages were important means of spreading the Catholic faith. Fr. John Larrea did a commendable job in this respect especially for the Lotha Nagas, he printed catechism and prayer books in the Lotha language.¹⁹⁶ Catholic missionaries also made use of films, booklets on the Bible and the Church; besides, the teachings of the Church in question and answer forms were distributed. These helped the people to gain a basic knowledge of the Catholic faith.¹⁹⁷ In Manipur, Bishop Marengo translated a prayer book in the Meitei language.¹⁹⁸

e. Music and Singing

The Nagas are fond of music and singing; and this often paved the way for the missionaries to have easy access to the youngsters.

The novelty of seeing Godhula singing Gospel hymns in Assamese attracted the people towards the missionaries. We have the words of Mrs. Clark, as quoted by Puthenpurakal:

For two or three days not a man, a woman or child would go near his house. But when with his deep-toned, melodious voice he poured out his soul in the sweet Gospel hymns in Assamese, the people flocked around him and listened as he told them in his own eloquent way, the sweet old, old story. Jesus and heaven were names now heard for the first time. The people coming up from their day's work at evening were conscious of a new, a different atmosphere. The influence of peace and love began to soften their hard hearts, and they called this rude grass hut (the hut in which Godhula was closed up, suspecting that he was a spy of the British) "the sweet home," the peaceful place. Soon the bands which made Godhula a prisoner were loosed and freedom of the village was his.¹⁹⁹

Clark himself is said to have carried his violin along with him when he first landed on the soil of Nagaland. He used to accompany the evangelist Godhula as he sang the Gospel hymns. It used to attract a lot of people, curious to know what was going on and curiosity was another gateway for the Gospel. When the crowd got bigger, there followed familiarity and friendliness. Restrictions were then put aside and freedom of communication followed.²⁰⁰

The experience of the early Catholic missionaries was the same. The Nagas were naturally gifted in music and music drew crowds. Fr. Joseph Felix, a gifted musician drew large crowds easily, as testified by Bishop Marengo.²⁰¹ Fr. Tarcisius, the late Archbishop of Shillong (†1999), a gifted musician and one of the pioneer missionaries among the Nagas, won over the Naga people by his fine voice and the musical choir he had organized. He says: “My music worked miracles. I carried my accordion always and everywhere and people used to come in hundreds. I taught them hymns in three voices and many came forward to be baptized.”²⁰²

Another example of the Nagas being drawn to the Church because of their love for music is highlighted by David Syiemlieh:

It was the Christmas celebration of 1953, the Church at midnight Mass was filled to capacity, even though the only Catholics there were Fr. Marocchino, the Sisters and a few soldiers. But there was no lack of Christmas carols. The children had learned several of them and sang these in their musical language.²⁰³

The secret behind that big gathering of the people was no other than the sweet voices of the children. This Christmas is said to have brought the first large group of adults and children to the Catholic faith.

The experience of missionaries in Manipur was no different. The Nagas of Manipur too are naturally gifted musicians and music lovers. Hence, music played an important role in evangelization. Fathers George Venturoli and Joseph Felix made use of music as an effective means of evangelization. Following upon their work,

Father John Med carried on the ministry of music. He compiled and published a hymn book called *All You Hills Praise the Lord*²⁰⁴ which is now in its third edition and is still very much used in the boardings and village communities.

The Church should seriously think about harnessing the natural musical talents of the Nagas and the other tribes of the Northeast. This will be a recognition and appreciation of the gifts and talents the people possess. By doing so, the Church will be promoting and encouraging the people to use their best gifts and talents to worship God.

f. The Role of the Students and Native Evangelists/ Catechists

It was through the instrumentality of the students and native evangelists that the adherents to the Baptist movement increased both in Manipur and Nagaland. Hence, the missionaries gave regular Bible instructions to the students, held common prayer meetings and through them a chain of contacts was slowly established with new villages.²⁰⁵ A commendable job was done by 'Gospel Teams' and native evangelists, both trained and untrained, in touring the villages. Many other groups also took active part in the evangelistic activities.²⁰⁶ J. Puthenpurakal too finds lay participation in evangelization as one of the main features of the missionary method of the Baptist and other Protestant missionaries.²⁰⁷

These and many other simple ways and means were made use of for the spread of the Baptist mission work. Distribution of Bible tracts and the conducting of prayer meetings were also used as a means to imbibe the Christian faith.

The early Catholic missionaries also made good use of the local youth for evangelization. Boys and girls were picked up from villages and given education and instruction in the faith. These youngsters would go back to their villages to be evangelizers. They would go to other villages and preach their newfound faith.

While sharing his missionary experiences in Manipur, Fr. Peter Bianchi says that lack of personnel in Manipur made the early

missionaries realize that they needed a second line of helpers to further the cause of evangelization. For this purpose a group of youth were sent to Dibrugarh to be instructed in the principal points of Catholic religion. These youth became evangelizers. Similarly another group of boys was sent to Golaghat to be instructed in the faith. It was through these catechists that the mission grew in different parts of Manipur.²⁰⁸ In this, the early missionaries can be said to have anticipated the teaching of Vatican II on lay participation in the work of evangelization.²⁰⁹

2. Methods Particular to the Baptists

a. Public Preaching

Preaching of the Gospel and administering of baptism were the main work of Clark and Godhula whenever they found a group of persons willing to listen to them.²¹⁰ In every Naga village there is a place for public gathering and the missionaries made the best use of these places to preach the Gospel.²¹¹ C. D. King himself expressly said, regarding the priority of the preaching of the Gospel: "Preach the Gospel, is the first requirement of our commission,"²¹² and it is said that Godhula's first meeting with the Nagas took place when he was preaching in the bazaar.²¹³ Even though the missionaries understood the importance of the school work for the Nagas, it was secondary in relation to preaching the Gospel. The primacy of "preach the Gospel" was always preserved.²¹⁴

In Manipur too, public preaching occupied a very important place in the spread of Christianity. For this reason, Pettigrew asked for another missionary who would either take over the educational and literary work and leave him free for the evangelical work of preaching or vice versa.²¹⁵ Where he was not allowed to preach publicly, Pettigrew preached through his schools.²¹⁶

This tradition of public preaching came to be considered one of the most effective means of winning new converts to Christianity. Under stiff opposition, Namrijipau, a Rongmei, stood outside a village and remained praying, preaching, singing and reading the Bible till he got exhausted. Seeing his conviction, some youngsters joined him.²¹⁷

The Baptist missionaries also made use of a great deal of Scriptural quotations to support their points of preaching and the same pattern was followed by the native evangelists.²¹⁸

b. Vocational Training

U. M. Fox's concept of mission was not determined solely by religious factors. He also trained the native workers in practical skills such as carpentry, metal works, etc. He saw a close link between material development and mission work. Material improvement often furthered the cause of the mission.²¹⁹

c. Sunday Schools

Another effective programme of evangelical activity was the 'Sunday School' classes. These were based on the regular Bible classes introduced in the various schools and in the local church at Ukhrul. Both Christians and the others were invited to these and the Bible stories were taught.²²⁰

This method of teaching Bible stories and imparting the Christian faith through them became a common practice in other parts of the state in later years and it holds true even to this day.

3. Methods Particular to the Catholics

a. Personal Contact

Personal contact and a friendly attitude were effective means of winning people over to the faith. Though Father Marocchino and the Sisters were prevented from doing any evangelizing work, they kept up personal contacts with the people around them. They visited the sick and called on friends. In the meantime, people became familiar with them and a small group of people became interested in the Catholic teachings and attended the Sunday services at the hospital chapel.²²¹ When Father Paul Bernick, a zealous missionary among the Nagas, was asked how he went about doing the mission work among the Nagas, he answered:

My method was very simple; it is “being available,” “people invite me and I go.” He also recalled the initial stages of the Catholic mission in Nagaland and said how personal contacts were bearing fruits: The whole Nagaland at that time had only three priests. There were no books to help them learn the language but personal contact with the people was of immense help to forge ahead with our mission to spread the Catholic faith among the Naga people. We made ourselves always available to the people.²²²

The early missionaries and others who came to the Naga Hills later realized the effectiveness of personal contact in spreading the faith. They kept in close contact with the groups and individuals who seemed to be willing to accept the Catholic faith and this was done by visiting the communities, families and friends frequently.

In Nagaland, the method of personal contact was prominent because of the restrictions imposed on the early missionaries. Manipur did not have such restrictions. Hence, this method was not much in evidence.

b. Touring Villages

To keep up personal contact with the people was not possible without touring the villages and staying with them. Therefore, the Catholic missionaries gave much importance to touring villages though this often involved much walking and climbing the steep hills of Nagaland and Manipur.²²³ Father Michael Mundthathu, SDB, one of the veteran missionaries and still active, describes his village tours thus:

When I toured the villages, a day was divided into church services for men, for women and for the youth. In the evening we used to have church service together. If it is a catholic village, we had the Eucharistic celebration. After the service, we would sit together. People would ask lots of questions. This time of questions and answers was very useful because when we gave instructions in the church many might not have listened but in group discussions all of them were listening

attentively. It was not a formal group discussion but just sitting around the fire and answering the questions put to me by the people was a wonderful experience and this bore much fruit in convincing the people in the faith.²²⁴

The Catholic missionaries gave priority to village touring because this also helped them to meet the spiritual needs of the people in the villages. Some of the villages turned them away or gave them the cold shoulder but on the whole it produced wonderful results.

Archbishop Tarcisius Resto describes his experience in these words: "During my three years of missionary experience in Nagaland, I toured extensively and that was wonderful as it made it possible to contact more and more people."²²⁵

Another pioneer of Catholic mission in Nagaland is Father Devasia Kollenkunnel, SDB. He shares a similar experience:

I had been touring all the villages. Whenever I visited the villages, I made sure that I pay a visit to the Baptist pastors and I made sure too that I took some boys and girls recommended by the pastors and the community leaders and kept them in the boarding at Wokha, so that slowly prejudices against the Catholics were disappearing. By the time I left Wokha, I had established a very good rapport with the Baptists.²²⁶

In the course of years, especially in the early years, a lot of prejudices and misunderstandings between the Baptists and the Catholics had cropped up. Hence touring the villages was also an exercise in ecumenism.

Volumes could be written on the enthusiasm of the pioneer missionaries who toured the length and breadth of Manipur, always walking on foot to reach out to people. at the cost of many sacrifices. They went whenever they found even the minimum of hope to bring souls to Christ. Such tours would often last a month or even more. On one such a tour, Father Bianchi recalled that Father Ravalico covered the whole of the southeast and north eastern parts of Manipur, the Moyon, the Lamkang and the Tangkhul areas.²²⁷ Bishop Marengo himself toured extensively

the hills of Manipur. One of his tours, in 1956, to the south-western area is worth mentioning. It was a tour of gruelling marches. The terrain is more rugged in this area. There were hardly any Catholics in the area but the Bishop's fatherly manners conquered the hearts of the people.²²⁸ Father Bianchi narrates his experience of a long tour of the Tangkhul area with Bishop Marengo:

We started our tour to Choithar, Nungshong, Pushing, Khamasom ... While Bishop was moving nimbly up the steep climb from Pushing to Sihai, I was panting for breath and my legs, not accustomed to such paths, were aching. At last we reached Khamasom Phungre, from there next day, we went to Nungbi.²²⁹

Keeping Hundung and later Imphal as his headquarters, Father Bianchi made extensive tours of the Mao and the Maram areas. The prodigious growth of the Church in these areas is a living witness to his untiring tours.²³⁰

Other early missionaries also toured extensively. Father Joseph Mattam, the first diocesan priest, toured the length and breadth of the southwestern and southeastern areas.²³¹ Father Joseph Felix was one who toured the Tangkhul and the Rongmei areas of Ukhrul and Tamenglong respectively.²³²

Thus the pioneer missionaries gave much importance to touring villages. The spread of Catholicism in Manipur owes much to them. Touring of villages seems to have become a dying art for the present day missionaries.

c. Bible and Catechism Classes

Father Michael Balavoine is said to have contributed much to the spread of the Catholic faith in the south west of Manipur through his Bible classes. He put up a notice in the market place, announcing Bible classes at his residence. A number of people would regularly attend his classes and some of them embraced the Catholic faith. Some of these were also sent out to other villages as catechists.²³³ Father Joseph Mattam followed the same method and was equally successful in attracting people to the Church.²³⁴

CONCLUSION

The methods employed by the early Baptist and Catholic missionaries overlapped. However, we have separated them in order to indicate the emphasis of one method over another. In other words, most of these methods were practised by both, but some were more prominent among the Catholics and others with the Baptists.

The following remarks apply to both the Baptist and Catholic missionaries, unless indicated otherwise. Something noteworthy in the work of the pioneers was the use of schools and medical service as a means for evangelization. The 'Home Board',²³⁵ the mother body which sponsored the Baptist Mission, for example, had given clear instructions to its missionaries to engage only in preaching the Gospel. But the missionaries in the field felt that medical service was a necessity. Today, both the Churches, Catholic and Protestant, engage themselves in the same apostolates and other developmental works.

The early missionaries were quick to realize the natural talent and fondness of the Nagas for music and singing and made good use of it. The effectiveness of music in mission work has been elaborated by T. C. George.²³⁶

The promotion of tribal literature also was one of the trademarks of the pioneers. In fact, they gave the written script to many tribals in the Northeast. The Churches need to continue this great tradition. If most of the tribals of the region can read the Bible in their own languages today, it was due to the efforts of the early missionaries.

Another outstanding feature of the early days of Christianity in the Northeast was the role played by the laity, the ordinary people, and the youngsters. The youngsters were the leaders and founders of the Catholic Church in many villages of Manipur.

Multiplicity of languages and dialects had been a problem for the early missionaries. It is still so for the missionaries of today. However, the number of missionaries who have mastered a Naga

language can be counted on one's fingertips. Today's missionaries need to do a little better than that to be effective communicators of the Word of God.

Connected to the just mentioned point is perhaps, the touring of villages. The early missionaries toured the length and breadth of Manipur and Nagaland, in spite of the tremendous odds they faced. That made them come into contact with people more and that in turn enabled them to learn the languages. These days, touring seems to be a dying art and so is the learning of the local languages.

The darkest spot of the early phase of the Churches in the Northeast was the unhealthy rivalry and the absence of an ecumenical atmosphere between the Baptists and Catholics. It is, perhaps, still true, though to a lesser extent. Building up a healthy ecumenical spirit may be one of the biggest challenges for the Churches of the region.

To all intents and purposes, almost all the Nagas of Manipur and Nagaland have been christianised. However, the question should be asked: have they really been christianised; how deep is the depth of their Christianity? Is there a need for a 'new evangelization'? These and similar issues will be taken up for discussion and expanded in the next part of our work.

ENDNOTES

1. Cf. Milada Ganguli, *A Pilgrimage*, op. cit. , p.15.
2. Cf. J. Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions*, op. cit., p.51.
3. Ibid.
4. Cf. A. Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, op. cit., p. 114.
5. Cf. J. Puthenpurakal, "Evangelization among the Nagaland Tribes," in S. Karotemprel, ed, *The Catholic Church in North East India 1890-1990 A Multidimensional Study*, Vendrame Missiological Institute, Shillong, 1993, p. 220.
6. Cf. H. Bareh, ed., *Nagaland District Gazetteer*, Government of Nagaland, Kohima, 1970, p. 93.
7. Cf. J. Puthenpurakal, "Evangelization," art. cit., p. 220.

8. Ibid.
9. This was often the case. The new Naga Christians often used to face stiff opposition from the others. So the solution used to be, either to create a new village or a new compound within the same village.
10. Cf. M. Muthumana, *Christianity in Assam and Inter-Faith Dialogue: A Study on the Modern Religious Movements in North East India*, Ishvani Kendra, Pune, 1984, p. 63.
11. Cf. J. Puthenpurakal, "Evangelization," art. cit., p. 221.
12. Cf. M. Horam, *North East India: A Profile*, op. cit., p. 198.
13. Cf. H. Bareh, *Nagaland District*, op. cit., p. 93.
14. Cf. S. K. Barpujari, "Christianity and its Impact on the Nagas: An Assessment of the Work of the American Baptist Mission," in S. Karotemprel, ed., *The Tribes of Northeast India*, Vendrame Missiological Institute, Shillong, 1984, p. 107.
15. Cf. M. Horam, *North East India*, op. cit., p. 201.
16. Cf. P. Singh, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 184
17. Cf. M. Muthumana, *Christianity in Assam*, op. cit., p. 64.
18. Cf. J. Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions*, op. cit., pp. 74-75.
19. Ibid., p.96.
20. Ibid., p. 111.
21. Ibid., p. 150.
22. Ibid., p. 110.
23. Cf. H. Sema, *Emergence of Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 50.
24. V. Epao, *From Naga Animism*, op. cit., p. 93.
25. Cf. H. Sema, *Emergence of Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 53.
26. Cf. V. Sanyu, *A History of Nagas and Nagaland: Dynamics of Oral Tradition in Village Formation*, Commonwealth Publications, New Delhi, 1996, p. 116.
27. Cf. J. Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions*, op. cit., p. 106.
28. Cf. V. Sanyu, *A History of Nagas*, op. cit., p. 117.
29. Cf. J. Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions*, op. cit., p. 119.
30. Ibid., p. 111.
31. Ibid., pp. 104 - 105.
32. Cf. M. Horam, *Nagas: Old Ways*, op. cit., p. 87.
33. Cf. V. Sanyu, *A History of Nagas*, op. cit., p. 116.
34. H. Bareh, *Nagaland District*, op. cit., p. 190.
35. Cf. P. Singh, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 185.
36. Cf. D. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Nagaland*, Vendrame Institute Publications, Shillong, 1990, p. 34.
37. Cf. V. Sanyu, *A History of Nagas*, op. cit., p. 120.
38. Ibid.
39. Cf. P. Singh, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 193.
40. Cf. J. Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions*, op. cit., p. 147.
41. Cf. P. Singh, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 192.

42. Cf. P. Dozo, *The Cross over Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 11.
43. Cf. L. Dena, *Christian Mission and Colonialism: A Study of Missionary Movement in Northeast India with Particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills 1894- 1947*, Vendrame Institute, Shillong, 1985, p. 31.
44. Ibid., p. 32.
45. Cf. D. Pudussery, "Evangelization among the Manipur Tribes," in S. Karotemprel, ed, *The Catholic Church in Northeast India 1890-1990: A Multi-dimensional Study*, p. 207.
46. Cf. Tangkhul Baptist Long (hereafter TBL), "Christ the Hope of Ages," in *Souvenir: In Commemoration of Rev. William Pettigrew's Arrival to the Tangkhul Area 1896-1996*, Ukhrul, 1996, p. 5.
47. Ibid.
48. Cf. F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God: A Brief History of the Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India, the Mission Period 1836 - 1950*, The Christian Literature Centre, Guwahati, 1971, p. 5.
49. Ibid., p. 77.
50. Ibid.
51. Cf. TBL, "Christ the Hope," art. cit., p. 5.
52. Ibid., p. 6.
53. Ibid.
54. Cf. F. S. Downs, *Christianity in North East India: Historical Perspective*, ISPK, Delhi, 1983, p. 140.
55. Cf. K. Vaiphei, "Introduction to Manipur: Christ the Hope of Ages," in *Souvenir: Centenary of William Pettigrew's Arrival in Manipur 1896-1996*, MBC, Imphal, 1996, p. 2.
56. Cf. F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works*, op. cit., p. 161.
57. Ibid., p. 165.
58. Ibid., p. 168.
59. Ibid., p. 170.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., p. 173.
62. Ibid., p. 175.
63. Cf. ibid., p. 180.
64. Ibid., pp. 182-82.
65. Cf. J. Athickal, *Maram Nagas: A Socio-Cultural Study*, Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1991, pp. 149-150.
66. Ibid., p. 150.
67. C. F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works*, op. cit., p. 80.
68. Cf. T. A. Shishak, "The Impact of Pettigrew's Educational Ministry upon the Tangkhul Naga Society," in *Souvenir: In Commemoration of Rev. William Pettigrew's Arrival to the Tangkhul Area 1896-1996*, Ukhrul, 1996, p. 32.
69. Ibid.
70. Cf. C. Jajo, *Christian Life*, op. cit., p. 24.
71. Cf. T. A. Shishak, "The Impact," art. cit., p. 31.

72. Cf. F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works*, op. cit., p. 158.
73. Cf. W. Pettigrew, "The Baptist Missionary Review," in *Souvenir: In Commemoration of Rev. William Pettigrew's Arrival to the Tangkhul Area 1896-1996*, Ukhrul, 1996, p. 41.
74. Cf. F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works*, op. cit., p. 164.
75. Cf. L. Jeyaseelan, *History of the Catholic Church in Manipur*, Diocese of Imphal, Imphal, 1994, p. 41.
76. Cf. L. Dena, *Christian Missions*, op. cit., p. 102.
77. Cf. F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works*, op. cit., p. 178.
78. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 179.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
80. Cf. J. Athickal, *Maram Nagas*, op. cit., p. 150.
81. Cf. C. Jajo, *Christian life*, op. cit., p. 34.
82. Cf. L. Dena, *Christian Missions*, op. cit., p. 35.
83. Cf. F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works*, op. cit., p. 161.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
85. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-63.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
87. *Ibid.*, p. 182.
88. Cf. F. S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India, vol. V: North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, The Church History Association of India, Bangalore, 1992, p. 110.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
90. W. Pettigrew, "The Missionary Review," art. cit., p. 41.
91. Cf. G. Kottuppallil, "A Historical Survey of the Catholic Church in North-east India from 1627 to 1969," in S. Karotemprel, ed., *The Catholic Church in Northeast India 1890-1990: A Multi-dimensional Study*, op.cit., p. 64.
92. *Ibid.*
93. Cf. J. Kallarackal, et al., *Data on the Church in the North East India* (Unpublished Paper), Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore, 1975, p. 54.
94. Cf. G. Kottuppallil, "A Historical Survey," art. cit., pp. 64-65.
95. Cf. J. Kallarackal et. al., *Data on the Church*, op. cit., p. 54.
96. Cf. G. Kottuppallil, "A Historical Survey," art. cit., p. 64.
97. *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.
98. Cf. D. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History*, op. cit., p. 49.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
100. *Ibid.*
101. Bishop Orestes Marengo, SDB, was the first Bishop of the Diocese of Dibrugarh, which at that time comprised the whole of Upper Assam together with the present States of Nagaland and Manipur. He was one of the most zealous missionaries North East India has seen. He died on July 30, 1998, at the age of 92.
102. Cf. G. Kottuppallil, "A Historical Survey," art. cit., p. 66.
103. Cf. J. Kallarackal, et al., *Data on the Church*, op. cit., p. 47.

104. Cf. A. Asiho, *Catholic Mission in Zeliang Area*, Nagaland Times Printing Press, Dimapur, n.d., p. 7.
105. Cf. D. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History*, op. cit., p. 69.
106. Ibid., p. 70.
107. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 74.
108. Ibid., p. 77.
109. Ibid., p. 80.
110. J. Med, Interview by author, Shillong, May 2, 1997.
111. Cf. D. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History*, op. cit., p. 80.
112. Cf. J. Kallarackal et al., *Data on the Church*, op. cit., p. 55.
113. Cf. D. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History*, op. cit., p. 46.
114. Cf. J. Kallarackal et al., *Data on the Church*, op. cit., p. 55.
115. Cf. D. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History*, op. cit., p. 60.
116. Ibid., p. 71.
117. Ibid., p. 160.
118. D. Kollenkunnel, Interview by author, Tape recording, Punanamei, January 28, 1997.
119. A. Asiho, *Catholic Mission in Zeliang Area*, op. cit., p. 7.
120. Cf. D. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History*, op. cit., p. 44.
121. Cf. J. Kallarackal et al., *Data on the Church*, op. cit., p. 47.
122. Cf. D. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History*, op. cit., p. 96.
123. Ibid., p. 76.
124. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 63.
125. Ibid., p. 53.
126. Cf. R. Chasie, "The Catholic Laity in Nagaland," in *Souvenir: Jotsoma Catholic Church Silver Jubilee 1967 - 1992*, Jotsoma, 1992, p. 16.
127. Cf. D. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History*, op. cit., p. 53.
128. Cf. *Directory*, Diocese of Kohima, 1995-1996, p. 11.
129. Cf. C. Becker, *History of the Catholic Mission in Northeast India (1890 - 1915)*, trans. and ed. by G. Stadler and S. Karotemprel, Vendrame Missiological Institute, Shillong, 1980, p. 134. Fr. Marcellinus Molz of the same Society is said to have visited Manipur earlier but we have no records about his visit.
130. Ibid., pp. 137-38.
131. Cf. L. Jeyaseelan, *History of the Catholic Church*, op. cit., p. 16.
132. Ibid., p. 14.
133. Ibid., p. 16.
134. Ibid.
135. Cf. J. Kallarackal, et al., *Data on the Church*, op. cit., p. 36.
136. Cf. L. Jeyaseelan, *History of the Catholic Church*, op. cit., p. 43.
137. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 43.
138. Cf. D. Pudusery, "Evangelization," art. cit. p. 210.
139. Cf. L. Jeyaseelan, *History of the Catholic Church*, op. cit., p. 43.
140. Cf. P. Bianchi, "A Missionary Experience in Manipur," in *Souvenir: Silver*

Jubilee of the Arrival of the Catholic Missionaries in Manipur 1952-1977. Hundung, 1977, p.28. When they were discovered, these communities were found to have kept up their Catholic faith without any priest for many years but they still knew their prayers and hymns in Latin. The catechists were coming from across the border to look after them. Occasional visits to villages close to the border were made by the M.E.P. missionaries who were evangelizing the Chin Hills.

141. Cf. L. Jeyaseelan, *History of the Catholic Church*, op. cit., p. 19.
142. Father A. Ravalico was a companion of Father Peter Bianchi. They were the first Catholic Priests in Manipur. Father Ravalico was born in Trieste, Italy, in 1906. He worked in Manipur Mission till 1962 and died in 1967 at Shillong.
143. Cf. L. Jeyaseelan, *History of the Catholic Church*, op. cit., p. 19.
144. Ibid., pp. 21-22.
145. Ibid., p. 25.
146. Cf. Jubilee Committee, "The Seed Grows," in *Souvenir: Longchum Catholic Church Silver Jubilee 1958-1983*, Tamenglong, 1983, p. 18.
147. Ibid., p. 17.
148. Ibid.
149. Ibid., p. 16.
150. Cf. L. Jeyaseelan, *History of the Catholic Church*, op. cit., pp. 71-72.
151. J. Felix, "Reminiscences," in *Souvenir: Longchum Catholic Church Silver Jubilee 1958-1983*, Tamenglong, 1983, p.20.
152. S. Asiho, (Rtd. Executive engineer), Interview by author. Punanamei, January 7, 1997. S. Asiho was the one who led the other two students to invite the Catholic missionaries to their village.
153. P. Bianchi, "My First Encounter with the Maos and the Marams," in *Souvenir: Silver Jubilee of St. Mary's Parish 1956-1981*, Punanamai, 1981, pp. 77-78.
154. Cf. J. Kallarackal, et al., *Data on the Church*, op. cit., p. 61.
155. Cf. P. Bianchi, "My first Encounter," art. cit. p. 22.
156. Cf. L. Jeyaseelan, *History of the Catholic Church*, op. cit., p. 63.
157. Ibid., pp. 64-65.
158. P. Bianchi, "A Missionary Experience in Manipur," art. cit., p. 20.
159. Cf. L. Jeyaseelan, *History of the Catholic Church*, op. cit., p. 51.
160. Ibid., p. 45.
161. Ibid., p. 65.
162. Ibid., pp. 53-54.
163. Cf. S. Nedumala, "Heroism in the Naga Hills," in *Souvenir: Silver Jubilee of St. Mary's Parish 1956-1981*, Punanamai, 1981, pp. 58-59.
164. J. Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions*, op. cit. , p. 140.
165. Cf. L. Dena, *Christian Missions*, op. cit., p. 91.
166. Cf. F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works*, op. cit., p. 76.
167. Cf. C. Jajo, *Christian Life*, op. cit., p. 27.

168. Cf. D. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History*, op. cit., p. 53.
169. Cf. V. Epao, *From Naga Animism*, op. cit., p. 91.
170. Cf. J. Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions*, op. cit., p. 143.
171. Cf. Milada Ganguli, *A Pilgrimage*, op. cit., p. 16.
172. Cf. S. K. Barpujari, "Christianity and its Impact," art. cit., p. 108.
173. Cf. J. Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions*, op. cit., p. 143.
174. Ibid., p. 112.
175. Cf. F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works*, op. cit., p. 79.
176. Cf. C. Jajo, *Christian Life*, op. cit., pp. 25-26.
177. Cf. TBL, "Christ the Hope," art. cit., p. 6.
178. Cf. D. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History*, op. cit., p. 47.
179. Ibid., p. 62.
180. Cf. S. Thottippatt, "At a Glance," in *Souvenir: Longchum Catholic Church Silver Jubilee 1958-1983*, Tamenglong, 1983, p. 1.
181. The literacy rate in Nagaland is 61.30 % while the National average is 52.11 %, *Manorama Yearbook 1995*, pp. 455 & 649.
182. Cf. P. Singh, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 185.
183. Cf. F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works*, op. cit., p. 160.
184. Cf. P. Singh, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 185.
185. Cf. S. K. Barpujari, "Christianity and its Impact," art. cit., p. 109.
186. Now they are known as Missionaries of Christ Jesus.
187. Cf. D. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History*, op. cit., p. 43.
188. Cf. *Directory*, Diocese of Kohima, 1995-96, p. 12.
189. An incident in the experience of Fr. Joseph Mattam, one of the pioneer missionaries in Manipur, is illustrative of this. He was not allowed entry into the village because a ritual had been performed on the sick wife of the headman, but Fr. Mattam's stock of some tablets not only cured the sick person but also allowed him full freedom to preach in the village, L. Jeyaseelan, *History of The Catholic Church*, op. cit., p. 36.
190. Cf. *Directory*, Archdiocese of Imphal, 1995, p. 5.
191. Cf. S. K. Barpujari, "Christianity and its Impact," art. cit., p. 109.
192. Cf. J. Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions*, op. cit., p. 80.
193. Cf. R. Muivah, "An Introduction to Ukhrul," in *Souvenir: In Commemoration of Rev. William Pettigrew's Arrival to the Tangkhul Area 1896-1996*, Ukhrul, 1996, p. 20.
194. Cf. C. Jajo, *Christian Life*, op. cit., p. 69.
195. Cf. F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works*, op. cit., p. 79.
196. Cf. D. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History*, op. cit., p. 57.
197. Ibid., p. 72.
198. Cf. P. Bianchi, "A Missionary Experience," art. cit., p. 28.
199. J. Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions*, op. cit., p. 145.
200. Cf. V. Epao, *From Naga Animism*, op. cit., p. 92.
201. Cf. O. Marengo, "Few Fond Remembrances in 25 Years of Loving Service to God and Men," in *Souvenir: Sacerdotal Silver Jubilee of Rt. Rev.*

- Abraham Alangimattathil 1964-1989*, Kohima, 1989, p. 35.
202. T. R. Phanrang, Interview by author, Shillong, April 25, 1997.
203. D. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History*, op. cit., p. 95.
204. The hymn book was published in two version: with music (Tonic Solfa) as well as without. Fr. John Med, though already over 80 years of age, still carries on teaching music to different communities.
205. Cf. J. Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions*, op. cit., p. 112
206. Ibid., p. 141.
207. Cf. J. Puthenpurakal, "Missionary Methods of the Protestants," in *IMR*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1984), pp. 38-49.
208. Cf. P. Bianchi, Interview by author, Sajoba, December 26, 1996.
209. Cf. A. Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II*, op. cit., *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (AA) 2-3.
210. Cf. J. Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions*, op. cit., 70.
211. Cf. V. Epao, *From Naga Animism*, op. cit., p. 93.
212. J. Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions*, op. cit., p. 98.
213. Cf. M. Muthumana, *Christianity in Assam*, op. cit., p. 63.
214. Cf. J. Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions*, op. cit., p. 90.
215. Cf. L. Dena, *Christian Missions*, op. cit., p. 36.
216. Cf. A. Yonuo, *Naga Struggle against the British Ruler under Jadonang and Rani Gaiduiliu 1925-1947*, Leno Printing Press, Kohima, 1982, p. 25.
217. Ibid., p. 30.
218. Cf. J. Puthenpurakal, *Baptist Missions*, op. cit., p. 141.
219. Cf. L. Dena, *Christian Missions*, op. cit., p. 37.
220. Cf. C. Jajo, *Christian Life*, op. cit., p. 27.
221. Cf. D. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History*, op. cit., pp. 43-44.
222. P. Bernick, Interview by author, Dimapur, March 6, 1997.
223. Cf. D. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History*, op. cit., p. 56.
224. M. Mundathanathu, Interview by author, Tape recording, Wokha, January 18, 1997.
225. T. R. Phanrang, Interview by author, Shillong, April 25, 1997.
226. D. Kollenkunnel, Interview by author, Punanamei, January, 18, 1997.
227. P. Bianchi, Interview by author, Shajoba, April 18, 1998.
228. Cf. L. Jeyaseelan, *History of the Catholic Church*, op. cit., p. 45.
229. P. Bianchi, "Looking back at Nungbi," in *Souvenir: Holy Spirit Church, the 28th Anniversary Celebrations 1955-1983*, Longpi, 1983, p. 11.
230. Cf. Sacred Heart Parish, "The Pioneering Missionaries of Manipur," in *Souvenir: Silver Jubilee of the Arrival of the Catholic Missionaries in Manipur 1952-1977*, Hundung, 1977, p. 35.
231. Cf. L. Jeyaseelan, *History of the Catholic Church*, op. cit., p. 35-36.
232. Cf. Sacred Heart Parish, "The Pioneering Missionaries of Manipur," art. cit., p. 35.
233. Cf. L. S Jeyaseelan, *History of the Catholic Church*, op. cit., p. 80.
234. Ibid., p. 37.

235. The controversy between the Home Board and the missionaries in the field are given in detail by F. S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, op. cit., pp. 39-45.
236. Cf. T. C. George, *Music in Mission*, (Unpublished M.Th. thesis), Sacred Heart Theological College, Shillong, 1997. This kind of research should hopefully result in some concrete projects like, for instance, a School of Music.

CHAPTER THREE

NAGA CHRISTIANITY: A CRITICAL EVALUATION

INTRODUCTION

Having described the story of the encounter between the traditional Naga society and Christianity, we shall now attempt to analyse the Naga Christian society. Naga Christianity is a hundred and twenty-five years old.¹ We shall examine the varied contributions Christianity made to the Naga society, and then we shall present an evaluation of Naga Christianity as a whole.

We shall also survey what the British anthropologists and administrators of the early encounter days had to say on these issues. Further, the voices of non-Naga Indian anthropologists, sociologists and academicians also will be dealt with. Then, we shall examine what the Naga scholars, ordinary Naga men and women, whom we had interviewed, have to say on these issues. This discussion is to serve as a launching pad for a new vision of Christianity for the third millennium which will be genuinely Naga and authentically Christian. Our analysis, on the whole, is an emic one, an insider approach. It is based primarily on our own experience as a Naga and a Christian.

I. EXTERNAL SIGNS OF THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY

1. Naga Society: A Christian Society

Nagaland has an area of 16, 579 square kilometres with a total population of 12, 15, 573.² Out of this total population,

87 percent are Christians. There are mainly two Christian Churches³: the Baptist and the Catholic. The Catholics number about 36, 941.⁴ Nagaland has the highest percentage of Christians among the states in India. Mizoram which has 85 percent Christian population, is second to Nagaland. Hence, Nagaland can truly be called a Christian state.⁵

2. Bible Loving

As one travels through Nagaland, on the National High Way Number 39, on the state high ways, through the towns and villages, one will find biblical quotations and captions and other meaningful Christian sayings on the road side, street corners and on vehicles such as: *Jesus Saves, Jesus never fails, My Grace is sufficient for You, God loves You, Love your neighbour especially those with Aids, His pain is your gain, Prayers go up and blessings come down, Prepare to meet your maker,* and so on.

These quotations and sayings seen everywhere are definitely one of the things a visitor to Nagaland notices and comes to the conclusion that the Nagas and their land have embraced Christianity. They are the external ways by which the Nagas want to express the influence of Christianity on their society and land as a whole. Do these external manifestations indicate an inner reality? This will be clarified as we proceed with our analysis. Apart from the biblical quotations displayed as noted above, the Bible is loved by the Nagas. All the major Naga tribes have the Bible, at least the New Testament, translated in their languages. They love to read the Bible, quote the Bible and discuss about the Bible. They know their Bible. Hence, we can say that these are signs indicative of Naga Christianity being a Bible conscious, Bible loving and Bible based Christianity.

3. Full of Christian Symbols and Names

The cross is the most significant and popular symbol of Christianity among the Nagas. They wear crosses around their necks and crosses are seen even on the milestones along the highways and byways.⁶

Pictures of Jesus, especially of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane are often displayed in front of public and private vehicles. Crucifixes and rosaries also are displayed in front of vehicles, especially by Catholic Christians.

The adoption of Christian and biblical names for places and people are also popular among the Nagas. When people become Christians, Christian or biblical names are given to them. The institutions too have biblical names like Mount Tabor Retreat Centre, Mount Gilead Detoxification Centre, Shalom Drug Rehabilitation Centre, etc.

4. Pride of Place for Churches in Every Village/Town

Every Naga village, big and small, has one or more churches. Some villages, especially the larger ones, have churches of different Christian denominations. Kohima, the capital town of Nagaland has as many churches as there are Naga tribes and Christian denominations. Each tribe has a church under the name of its tribe and denomination like Ao Baptist Church, Chakhesang Baptist Church, Mao Baptist Church. These Churches are constructed in the most prominent location of the village. They are also the best buildings in the village or town. The Catholic Cathedral in Kohima may be the best and most expensive church in the whole of Nagaland. People are generous in contributing towards the building of their churches.

5. Faithful Observance of Sundays

The strict observance of Sunday rest is also one of the most visible manifestations of Naga Christianity. On a typical Sunday in Nagaland, all the mundane activities of life come to a standstill. All shops and business close down. The only houses open are the houses of prayer, the churches. The only people seen on the roads and streets are people in their Sunday best, heading toward their respective churches with a Bible and a hymn book in the hand. A Sunday in Nagaland is a palpable experience of Christianity there.

On Sundays, “even in the deep woods the guerrillas join together to read the Bible, sing the psalms and listen to the pastor.”⁷

6. Enthusiastic in Celebrating Christian Festivals

One could surely say that the lives of many Nagas revolve around the celebrations of the great Christian festivals of Christmas, Good Friday and Easter. Christmas is, in a special way, a festival looked forward to by every Naga. It is a time for family reunion. Even if members of the family live in different places, they make every effort to get together at Christmas. It is also an occasion when the whole village comes together. Hence, it is a festival planned ahead for months and often celebrated for days. Christmas trees and stars also adorn many households, especially of the more educated and those living in the towns.

7. Christian Institutions

In comparison to its total population and size, Nagaland has many Christian institutions. Every district headquarter of Nagaland has one or more Christian institutions. There are also a number of Theological or Bible Colleges and seminaries. The Catholic Church runs four theological seminaries: three in Dimapur and one in Jalukie. The Protestants too have six such colleges.⁸

In proportion to the number of these theological colleges, theologically trained personnel too abound. In 1990, there were 241 theologically trained women, while the number of males was double and according to the 1991 record, there were 561 theologically trained Ao Nagas.⁹

As regards Manipur, the Naga tribes inhabit mainly four districts, namely, Ukhrul (eastern part of Manipur), Tamenglong (northwest), Senapati (north) and Chandel (southeast). In every one of these districts Christian institutions are established. However, other external signs of Christian presence are not as visible as in Nagaland because these areas in Manipur are also inhabited by other tribes (who are also Christians) as well as by the Meiteis,

the majority of whom are not Christians. The total tribal Christian population of Manipur is only one-third of its total population.

II. CHRISTIAN IMPACT ON EDUCATION

1. In General: Most Visible

One of the most visible and palpable Christian impact on the Naga society is undoubtedly modern education. From the earliest days of their mission, Christian missionaries saw the need of education for the Nagas. Early missionaries like Clark, Downs, Supplees, C. D. King, Rivenburg and William Pettigrew made great efforts to establish schools and give education to the Nagas.¹⁰ This was done in spite of opposition from the 'Home Board' who wanted the missionaries only to preach the message of the Gospel and nothing else.

The Catholic missionaries too, when they came on the scene, started schools in many villages. Today, the local clergy and religious in the Catholic Church as well as many of the lay leaders are products of these schools started by the early missionaries.

The American Baptist and Catholic missionaries, according to B. G. Verghese, were responsible for introducing literacy which was non-existent, and today the Nagas value highly education and are keen to send their children to school.¹¹

Today, Nagaland has a literacy rate of 61.65 percent as against 52.21 percent of the national average, according to the 1991 census.¹² The interesting part of it is that the level of female literacy is 54.75 per cent¹³ against the national female literacy rate of 39.29 percent. Most of the children of school-going age are in school which cannot be said of many parts of the country.¹⁴

The Catholic Church, in particular, is known to be an excellent agent of education and widely acknowledged too. According to Philomath Passah, in respect of educational activities, the Catholic mission has excelled all other missions. Despite their late arrival in the North-east, the Catholic mission has achieved a greater success in the field of education than have the others.¹⁵

We shall now briefly point out how education brought about by Christian missionaries is seen as an agent of change in the Naga society. How do the non-Nagas see it and how do the Nagas themselves see it?

2. Christian Education: Window to Wider Horizons

Christian education has brought about social changes in the Naga society. It has opened up frontiers of knowledge and helped the Nagas to cross over from a dark past to a bright future. It has enabled them to shed their superstitious beliefs and get over their complexes arising out of an isolationist existence. Through their educational institutions, the Christian missions have also contributed to the spread of literacy, to higher learning and the acquiring of new technical and vocational skills which are necessary prerequisites for a society in the process of development and social change.¹⁶ Often Christianity has been identified with education which in turn means westernization in lifestyle, family and economy.¹⁷ Christian education had done much to remove ignorance and superstition as well as to increase the literacy rate in the region. This is true to this day as the primary and major agent of literacy and higher education in many remote villages is the Christian Church.¹⁸ True to their proverbial zeal, the missionaries, in the words of S. Datta, set about educating the Naga people which ushered in a radically new living style.¹⁹ Through its mission of education, Christianity could be said to have outdone the Government in bringing the different Naga tribes closer to one another. Here, S. K. Barpujari's remarks may be relevant:

With the spread of Christianity, education and the use of English, the linguistic diversity was greatly reduced and the different Naga groups could come together into the same realm of thought and culture. A sense of solidarity among the diverse groups of the Naga or Nagaism emerged.²⁰

The brief survey given above was what the non-Nagas say about the influence of Christianity on education among the Nagas.

Another brief account of what the Nagas themselves say about the same may be appropriate.

Naga scholars too recognize and acknowledge the fact that the seed of modern education, hence also, the process of modernization, was sown by the Christian missionaries. Thus according to V. Sanyu, Christian missionaries opened up facilities to educate the Nagas and brought them into contact with the outside world.²¹ Western education which was first introduced by the Christian missionaries played the role of both an eye opener as well as that of uplift among the Naga tribes who were destitute of literacy, according to A. Daili.²²

Speedy expansion of education at primary, secondary, college and university levels as well as professional education solved some problems and yet created new gaps as well. Hence, in the words of M. Alemchiba, "...an 'uneasy population' unable to adjust themselves with village life was created in the rural population."²³

The increase in education also brought about the increase in school dropouts. For many Nagas, education is associated with 'being Christian' and there are few educated Nagas who have not been brought up as Christians. Hence Terhuja rightly points out: "It is regarded as 'fashionable' to get education and become a Christian because majority of the educated are Christians."²⁴ This means that some become Christians just for the sake of education or the fashionableness of it.

The fact remains that modern education has brought about tremendous changes in Naga society. There are educated Nagas who measure themselves against the traditional standards and find life flat and baffling. Modern education has created a new social stratum of the elite class among the Nagas.

Education, according to Horam, has also brought the Nagas into close contact with the people of different parts of India:

Of late there has been a great leap in the field of conventional education in Nagaland. With the introduction of education, other communities have also come to Nagaland from different parts of India with different new ideas and norms of life.

Besides, a number of boys and girls go to schools, colleges and universities in other parts of India, even outside the country. This exposure to the outside world has made them see, think, and act like their counterparts.²⁵

We had prepared and sent out a questionnaire to a number of Nagas belonging to different Naga tribes and also interviewed many Nagas. Ninety-nine per cent of these acknowledged that the greatest benefit they received from Christianity was education (the best education). This, in turn, made them better off than their counterparts in the interior villages who are not educated.

In spite of all the benefits which Christianity brought about with their education we also see some negative elements. It undermined much of what was good and valuable in the traditional Naga way of life²⁶ and it has produced an emerging elite with a political leadership.²⁷ According to B. B. Kumar, the educated Nagas tend to think that they are fit only for sitting and eating jobs, the jobs carrying status but not involving manual labour.²⁸ A. K. Nongkynrih similarly says:

Mass literacy has helped in building a population with knowledgeable information but lacking skill and confidence to stand on their own feet, or in other words, we produce only job seekers not job creation. As far as Catholics are concerned they are the most backward in every sphere even though we claim to have the best educational institutions.²⁹

Another negative element pointed out by B. B. Kumar is that education for the Nagas led to a “no work” ethos and thus escape from strict village discipline and manual labour. As a result, even the school dropouts do not return to villages to pursue the old ways of life.³⁰ We may add that these dropouts are easy recruits for insurgent movements and other militant movements.

Yet another malaise is the craze for white collar jobs. It seems that education is primarily for white collar jobs. This is how B. B. Kumar puts it:

The early Christian converts received education and got white collar jobs. They found themselves soon highly placed in

comparison to the traditional village elite. This brought about a change in their attitude towards Christianity. Moreover, most of the Naga leaders, ministers, Government officers were Christians and this had its due psychological impact on the people.³¹

The same tendency is noticed by Prakash Singh, when he wrote: “The educated boys and girls hankered after white collar jobs in the towns and preferred to work on a desk to toiling in the fields. Some of those who entered government services have unfortunately succumbed to the vices of the modern world.”³²

However, he goes on to say that it is not to be concluded that education is evil; it is just that the changes have been too swift for a balanced and harmonious evolution.³³

There seems to be no doubt in the minds of both the insiders and outsiders that the most enduring effect of the advent of Christianity has been the introduction of education in the Naga society. Today, it is the desire of all parents to send their children to school. Earlier, the missionaries had to force the parents to send their children to school.

This has resulted in a change in the value system too, for now a man would rather give a good education to his children than spend the amount on traditional community feasts.³⁴ Without in any way belittling the role of the Christian Churches in the education in the Naga society, a few constructive critical remarks would not be out of place.

3. A Critical Evaluation of Christian Impact on Specific Aspects

a. Education only for Information, not for Formation

Paulo Freire, the great Brazilian educator used to compare the modern education with banking system in which according to him,

students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués

and 'makes deposits' which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the 'banking concept of education,' in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filling, and storing deposits.³⁵

According to him, this system of education is an instrument of oppression; the problem-posing concept of education is an instrument of liberation.³⁶ Christian schools and educational institutions among the Nagas must honestly examine themselves whether they have merely imparted knowledge or have really formed people and their character. Have Christian schools imparted value education? Or have/are Christian schools and educational institutions run sans Christian values?

b. Commercialization of Education

Taking advantage of the Nagas' appreciation of English medium schools, schools with exorbitant fees are mushrooming all over Nagaland, Manipur and the Northeast as a whole. Many Christian missionary schools too are seen in this light. It is not enough to have the good intention of running a school for the poor and the needy, it must also be seen in action and reality.

Another sign of commercialization of education is seen in the fact that most Christian educational institutions are located in the urban areas. Many children of the rural areas are illiterate. In Manipur, most of the schools in the urban areas, including those belonging to the Church, are targets of extortion from the various militant groups. They allege that the schools are more for commercial purposes than real education. Perhaps, this is one of the signs of the times beckoning us to take education to the rural poor. In this, we agree with what Father T. J. Chacko has to say. Speaking about the urban schools, he makes this plea:

Let us courageously leave the education of the educated and the rich in our society as they do not really need us. Let our laity do that work as other private schools and Government schools do. Let us keep only our poorer parish and village schools since they really need us because others would

not be interested in them. They will be still relevant as means of evangelisation.³⁷

c. Neglect of Higher Learning

There has been on the whole, a neglect of higher learning on the part of Christian educators among the Nagas. After 125 years of Christianity, institutions of higher learning are very few in comparison with those of the primary level. The two more outstanding Christian institutions of higher learning for the Nagas are: Patkai Christian College, near Dimapur, which is jointly sponsored by NBCC and MBC³⁸ and St. Joseph's College, Jakhama, run by the Catholic diocese of Kohima. Manipur does not have any Christian institution of secular higher education for the Nagas. Hence, there is a need for more emphasis on higher education.

d. Neglect of Technical Education

As already mentioned, the type of education imparted so far has been for only white-collar jobs and that too for Government jobs. According to B. G. Verghese, like most Northerners, the Nagas are home-loving and seek white collar "jobs," not "work." With little infrastructure or industry and a traditional agriculture, the only opportunities are in government, politics and contracting. There is already considerable administrative over-manning and, hence, frustration and discontentment leading to alienation which provides a ready breeding ground for the underground or other sloganeers who promise liberation, justice and an alluring future.³⁹ There is hardly any Christian institution for the Nagas which gives technical education. In other words, the education given so far is one-sided. It prepares people only for office work. The Nagas on the whole lack the technical know-how to improve their agriculture, to harness the rich natural resources, in a word, to build an economy of their own.

The Government departments cannot absorb all the educated. Hence, this kind of stress only on formal education breeds the problem of unemployment which in turn can become a

factor for the emergence of insurgency and other militant organizations.

e. Neglect of Education/Literacy of Rural Areas

Today the educational institutions of Christian missionaries are concentrated mostly in the urban areas. The Churches in Nagaland and Naga inhabited areas of Manipur need to take education to the rural masses. Unless this is done, urbanization of the rural masses and its consequent social evils will be the problems to be addressed in a not too distant future.

III. CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO NAGA ECONOMIC LIFE: NEGLIGIBLE

1. No Change in Agricultural Methods

We have already mentioned that for the traditional Naga society, land and forest were the primary economic resources. We also have indicated that about 80% of the Naga population were engaged in farming, practising 'jhuming' (slash-and-burn) and terracing methods of cultivation. Even today, the situation remains the same. The technology involved does not appear to have made any significant departure from the past even after the advent of Christianity into the region. The age-old shifting cultivation or slash and burn dominate the agricultural practice among the same tribes.⁴⁰ According to a survey made by a United Nations' International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a total of 19.08 lakh hectares of land in the Northeast are under the slash-and-burn jhum method of cultivation and Nagaland has the dubious distinction of topping the list with 6.33 lakh hectares under jhum and 1.16 lakh families dependent on this form of cultivation. The second is Manipur with 3.6 lakh hectares and 70,000 families.⁴¹ The hill areas where the Nagas live, except for some parts of Ukhrul and Senapati districts of Manipur, practise jhum cultivation.

The report also points out the decline of the crop yields due to the reduced fertility of the land which, in turn, is due to the

pressure of population which does not allow the land to lie fallow for a longer period. In the old days, it was possible to allow the land to lie fallow for ten or more years. Now it is so only for four or five years. Due to this, the report says that the yield per hectare, which is the average area a family gets, is as low as 900 kg.⁴²

So far, the Christian Churches have not yet seriously addressed this problem. The IFAD, according to the report, has allotted 13.7 million American dollars (out of the total 20.4 million dollars which was for the North Eastern Region Community Resource Management Project for Upland Areas), “to wean the farmers away from this practice (jhum) by adopting a novel and innovative multi-pronged strategy.”⁴³ Without a change in this method, the economic condition of the people will ever remain the same and without a basic humanizing economic betterment, there cannot be a real holistic development.⁴⁴ Besides causing ecological disaster, jhum cultivation is the most uncertain means of livelihood. It is also a practice that leaves a family hardly any time for anything else. At the end, the yield from this is highly disproportionate to the labour put in.⁴⁵

2. Low Per Capita Income

The economic development of a people is usually measured by its money-power, its per capita income. The per capita income of Nagaland (1988-89) was Rs. 3464 and that of Manipur (1989-90) was 3502. Each of these is lower than the national per capita income (1991-92) which was Rs. 6929.⁴⁶ These statistics clearly show that the economic power of the Nagas is much lower than that of the majority of people in the rest of the country. Besides, if the general picture is low, the lot of the vast majority of the Nagas will be still lower. There may not be the abject poverty of the slums of many cities of India, but there is poverty among the Nagas.

3. Dependent Economy

Nagaland is one of the ten special category states in the Indian Union which are covered under a liberal central assistance pattern of 90 percent grants and 10 percent loans. Central assistance to Nagaland increased from Rs. 104.46 crores in 1989-90 to Rs.

182.45 crores in 1993-94.⁴⁷ This pouring in of money by the centre without building up the economic infrastructure is a bane rather than a boon for the economic development of the Nagas.

In short, though Christianity pioneered in the field of education, it has failed them in the field of economic growth.

IV. CHRISTIAN IMPACT ON POLITICAL LEADERSHIP: NEGLIGIBLE

There are many Naga Christian political leaders both in Nagaland and Manipur. The question to be asked is: Are they influenced by Christian principles or values in their functioning? Or are they as corrupt or even more corrupt than their counterparts in the rest of the country? Today, the Indian political scene in general is full of scams and scandals. There is talk about criminalization of politics. How do the Naga Christian political leaders fare?⁴⁸ Nagaland seems to have earned the distinction of being full of “corruption.”⁴⁹

Patricia Mukhim, writing on corruption in the Northeast says that if all the scams in the Northeast are put together, “the Bihar fodder scam would pale into insignificance.”⁵⁰ She also alleges that the chief ministers of the Northeast ‘have been projecting their states as under-developed and poor’ which may well be ‘a well-rehearsed drama’ and they may be getting a package deal from the centre to keep insurgency alive in their states because “no insurgency means no money.”⁵¹ Serious as the allegations are, one must admit that they have a ring of truth in them.

The issue relevant for our purpose is: Does Christianity professed by the Naga leaders have any influence on their administration? Apparently it does not seem to have any impact. And ‘amazingly’, according to Patricia Mukhim, tribals claim to be backward in many respects but have gained notoriety in the field of corruption.⁵² One might console oneself by saying that this is the disease affecting the majority of political leaders in the country. But the Naga Christian political leaders cannot escape

under these excuses. Both the values in their culture and adopted religion should have some influence on them.

In short, education pioneered by Christianity among the Nagas seems to be slowly deteriorating into commercialism without much of Christian inspiration. The economic contribution of Christianity to the Naga society seems more bleak and so is impact on political leadership. What about the impact of Christianity on other social institutions like head-hunting and the practice of *Morung* ?

V. CHRISTIAN IMPACT ON NAGA SOCIO-CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

1. Head-Hunting

On the whole, the people in the rest of India are very ignorant about the Northeast and its peoples. The Nagas are a little better known than the others because of the long story of their struggle for independence. However, what most people know about the Nagas is mainly about their still being naked or about their dances and their practice of 'head-hunting.'⁵³

The Nagas too were scandalized by what they witnessed in Europe during the First World War. The British Government had recruited about 400 Nagas in their labour corps:

The indirect influence of World War I was tremendous. The Nagas who went to France brought back horrified accounts as to how the great civilized nations fought for their end and interests while Nagas were condemned as barbarous for their head-hunting wars...the intercourse among the different Nagas of different tribes in France, far from their homes fostered mutual love, service and a sense of political unity which manifested itself in their verbal resolution that on return to their land they would work for friendship and unity among themselves and give up their nasty weaknesses like head-hunting and village feud. It was this spirit which spearheaded an upsurge of the Naga nationalist movement.⁵⁴

Every culture and its people have their plus and minus points. If the Nagas had practised head-hunting in the past, it was

because people of other villages and tribes were considered enemies, a threat to their lives and security. This was not unique to the Nagas of the past nor of the present. Other tribes and peoples too had this mentality in the past and in the present too. The war of 'ethnic cleansing' in the former Yugoslavia, the one between the Hutus and the Tutsis in Rwanda and that of the Palestinians and Israelis are a few examples of the many and varied versions of head-hunting going on in the world. Even today, head-hunting goes on in one form or another among all peoples and countries. Legal elimination - by the police or the armed forces - of individuals, groups or peoples who are perceived to be threats to those in power does not diminish the heinousness of modern day head-hunting.

In all these cases, people of good will realize that such hatred and violence are the black spots of their history and make efforts to correct them. The Nagas too realized this practice as a dark spot in their culture and decided to give it up, as shown in the narration of their experience in France during the First World War.

Nobody is sure how exactly the practice of head-hunting began. Perhaps it was unknown to the Nagas. According to a folk tale, it had something to do with a bird, a lizard and a red ant. The story goes like this: "Once a bird dropped a berry from a tree. A lizard and a red ant fought for it. Some Nagas saw the red ant cut off the lizard's head and thus they learnt to take heads."⁵⁵

However, as pointed out earlier, some practices like inter-village warfare and head hunting were part of Naga life "as tilling the soil in the spring for their descendants, was."⁵⁶

a. The Ban: British Influence

The British administration was responsible for the actual banning of the practice of head-hunting. They were appalled by the wide-spread practice. They did not actually promulgate a legislation forbidding it; but the gradual extension of their administration over the Naga Hills districts like Wokha, Kohima and Mokokchung made people appeal to them (the British) to

prevent head-hunting. Thus in 1889, the Ao Naga territory was formally annexed and the practice of head-hunting was banned.⁵⁷

b. Effects of the Ban

According to W. C. Smith, the ban on head-hunting made the Nagas look to some other areas to satisfy their desire for new experience. Thus they turned to the use of guns, to smoking and other elements of a more advanced culture.⁵⁸ Speaking about the Angami Nagas, Smith says that “the younger men complained bitterly that the British, by stopping their raids and so preventing them gaining works of distinction, have made it impossible for them to get wives.”⁵⁹

On the other hand, this prohibition made it possible for the people to grow more crops and live freely in safety.⁶⁰ This also made the Nagas begin to appreciate the existence of other people. Inter-village raids were reduced and people began to settle down peacefully.⁶¹ Hence, J. P. Mills rightly remarks: “By putting a stop to head-hunting the British government has profoundly changed the mode of life of all the tribes in the administered areas of the Naga Hills.”⁶²

c. Christian Influence

Have not Christian missionaries and Christianity in any way influenced the banning of head-hunting? Even if the British had officially banned the practice, without the influence of Christianity, it would have been difficult to implement it. Christianity did contribute to the end of this practice for the “constant feuds and head-hunting of these people were cut short by the new doctrine based on love and brotherhood.”⁶³

Other authors also do admit that Christianity had a role in the banning of head-hunting. According to Prakash Singh, the spread of Christianity and the enlightenment arising out of education gave men a moral outlook with which the old philosophy of life for life was incompatible. The practice of head-hunting

died a natural death.⁶⁴ Perhaps there was no single unique factor but a number of factors for the change as Roy Burman points out. The British officials, the American Baptist Missionaries and the Naga Christians, all condemned the head-hunting practice.⁶⁵ As already pointed out, the experience of the Nagas in Europe during the First World War also had a deep impression and made them resolve to end the practice.

d. Has the Spirit of Head-Hunting really gone?

The North-Eastern hilly state of Nagaland is heading for a civil war due to the increasing clashes between two Naga insurgent groups despite the ceasefire between the security forces and Isaac-Muivah faction of the insurgents, State Chief Minister S. C. Jamir, said.⁶⁶

The two factions referred to are the NSCN-IM and NSCN-K.⁶⁷ The chief minister pointed out that a total of 104 killings, mostly internecine fights between the two Naga insurgent groups have been reported since the commencement of the ceasefire, as against 30 to 40 insurgency related killings a year in the past.⁶⁸ This would appear to be a remnant of the head-hunting tradition. Of course, another headline in the news reads: "Naga rebel factions offer truce."⁶⁹ The reason for this suspension of hostilities was so as not to disturb the quasiquicentennial (125 years) celebrations of Christianity in Nagaland which had been a big affair and many Christian leaders from the US were expected to attend the celebration.⁷⁰ If the Nagas take their Christianity seriously, this should be an occasion, not just for grandiose celebrations but a time of penance to hang their heads in shame for their discrediting Christ and Christianity ("The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," Rom 2: 24). Translated in our context, the apostle Paul would be telling the Nagas, that the name of Christ and Christianity is held in contempt because of your way of Christian living. The Nagaland Minister for Higher and Technical education was quite forthright in saying: "if the Nagas cannot remove the hatred born out of narrow prejudices, then it is better that they become non-Christians again."⁷¹ This is because if they genuinely practise Christianity and seriously mean

“Nagaland for Christ,” then “we who are baptized into Christ, have clothed ourselves with Christ and there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3: 28).

2. Abolition of *Morung* (Bachelors’ Dormitory)

We have already pointed out the wide spread practice and the significance of the institution of *morung* among the different Naga tribes. We have also indicated that it is practically non-existent now. Was Christianity responsible for the disappearance of the *morung*? If so, what were the reasons against the practice? Were these reasons justified? These will be the issues addressed here.

a. Christianity: Responsible for the Demise of the *Morung*

It was said that the *morung* in Changki village of the Ao tribe had fallen into decay because the Christians refused to have anything to do with this establishment.⁷² In the opinion of H. D’Souza, the biggest change brought about by the Christian missionaries in the Naga village life is that they forbade the converts to live in their village *morung*.⁷³ Many are of the opinion that Christianity has destroyed the *morung* system without having replaced it with any other socializing activity. However, other scholars feel that the bachelors’ dormitory or *morung* did not disappear because of Christianity or Western education but more because it became dysfunctional with the attenuation of the head-hunting practice which necessitated a thoroughly regimented martial society.⁷⁴ M. Alemchiba shares the same view in saying that with the ban on head-hunting, the necessity of the *morung* which was a guard house, was no longer there.⁷⁵

Some of the Naga converts themselves must have also considered it ‘immoral’ to sleep in the *morung*. Haimendorf quotes a Baptist pastor: “How could a Christian boy sleep in these houses of the heathen? To use them would be against our rules.”⁷⁶ The reason often given against the *morung*, according to H. D’Souza,

was that the institution fostered sexual promiscuity, a fear the missionaries held uppermost in their mind.⁷⁷

There are two reasons why such a system has been discarded, initially due to Christianity, for the missionaries disapproved of the practice on the assumed ground that a *morung* was a place of vice; secondly, due to modernization and the consequent drastic changes in habits and tastes, the *morungs* have been abandoned as impractical or irrelevant institutions.⁷⁸

b. Demise of the *Morung*: a Loss

Many scholars feel that the abolition of the *morung* system has destroyed a valuable disciplinary agency and caused the boys to lose respect for the authority of their elders.⁷⁹ It has created a void and destroyed the society.⁸⁰ For M. Alemchiba, a Naga himself remarks: “with the decline of this institution and in the absence of any other institution in its place, the discipline and orderliness particularly among the young people deteriorated and a vacuum was created in the village social organization.”⁸¹

c. Not Abolition but Adaptation

It may be true that for today’s school and college going Naga boys and girls, living in a *morung* with its rules and taboos is neither possible nor practical.⁸² However, according to H. D’Souza,

the present day Christian organizations like the Catholic Action (C.A.), Christian Endeavour (C.E. of the Baptists), fill in the role of the *morung* to an extent but not to the full. Christian Churches today can create institutions in keeping with the cultural ethos of the people, so that our young get trained not only in their traditional ways but also in Christian values; if we can do that I am sure the Naga society will become a truly Christian society. This is a challenge not only for the missionaries but also for the people who have accepted Christianity.⁸³

No society or culture can remain static or unchanged for centuries. So also no society or culture can be without some negative elements. There is no perfect society or culture. The

way to do away with these negative elements is not to abolish or destroy them but to adapt, modify and renovate. The approach should be to examine whether any element of culture is against the Gospel value. Most often what is authentically cultural will not be against what is authentically Christian. The opposition usually comes when superficial elements of Christianity and superficial elements of culture are put together side by side.

The demise of the institution of *morung* is thus largely because of the version of Christianity preached to and accepted by the Nagas. In the new way of being Christian, there will be no such opposition but mutual enrichment. In this, “utilising the *morung*, the Naga Church will be able to build a community of believers who are deeply rooted in the culture of the soil. This will help them realize themselves as Nagas, following not a foreigner’s religion but a religion that is rooted in one’s own culture.”⁸⁴

3. Festivals

As pointed out earlier, the Naga socio-cultural life is well marked by festivals. Here we shall highlight two festivals which are no longer celebrated these days, namely, the *Feast of Merit* and the *Diplomatic Feast*.

a. The Feast of Merit: Abolished due to Christian Influence

The traditional Feast of Merit in the Naga society, as already mentioned, is essentially an institution through which production was encouraged and its equitable distribution made effective. The abolition of it deprived the tribal life of its traditional vigour.⁸⁵ According to Haimendorf, this feast, forbidden by the missionaries, had a very important social and economic function. For the Nagas, a man did not gain social prestige by merely possessing wealth but only by spending it for the benefit of the community.⁸⁶ The celebration of this feast had nothing to do with the animistic religion and its significance was “so as to use up the perishable food supply which otherwise would have been spoiled. This also was one way the Nagas relaxed and celebrated life. Missionaries had to call a halt to this because of the rigid prohibition imposed

by the puritanical Baptist Church.”⁸⁷ M. Alemchiba holds a similar opinion. The American Baptist missionaries felt that every Naga ceremony should be abolished. As for the ceremonies of the great Feast of Merit, the religious aspect was far less important than the social.⁸⁸

Why did the Baptist missionaries call a halt to this great and important feast? According to Haimendorf’s observation, the missionaries objected to the Feast of Merit presumably because the animals consumed in their course are not just slaughtered but sacrificed with appropriate invocations of the spirits.⁸⁹ Furthermore, he points out: “yet one would think that with a little trouble an institution of an essentially social and economic character could have been remodelled so as to be compatible with Christian tenets, as it was done in Europe with folk festivals.”⁹⁰

b. Effects of Abolition

With the prohibition of the Feast of Merit, the Naga spirit of sharing seems to be losing ground, giving way to individualism as Haimendorf once again rightly points out:

In Christian villages, the rich, free of traditional obligations towards their neighbours and forbidden to perform Feasts of Merit, tend to hoard their rice or to sell it to the highest bidder. With the community spirit broken, individualism begins to assert itself, and the Western idea of pride in possession of goods fostered probably quite unconsciously by the missionaries replaces the Aos’ traditional pride in the lavish expenditure of his wealth.⁹¹

M. Alemchiba’s observations further clarify the effect of the prohibition of this feast:

The tendency was to abolish the old things and substitute it with individualism for the strong community feeling which had enabled the tribes to survive so long. Not only this individualism wrapped up with strong emphasis on personal salvation, it induced a direct and natural reaction against all the old things that mattered in the village life and social genius

of the tribe. The result was a conflict, not necessarily a conflict of arms but of culture, a conflict between the interest of community and individual which caused cultural tension in society.⁹²

The challenge for missionaries today is to remodel this important feast so as to make the Nagas preserve the spirit of sharing and the strong community feeling. It will be to inculcate in the Nagas what George Soares calls the values of “anti-greed and anti-pride”:

A tribal ethos based on the values of anti-greed and anti-pride offers a valuable alternative model for India today which is being devastated by the greed of consumerism and the pride of caste. This ethos is in tune with the ethos of the Bible, and in particular with the ethos of Jesus, who as the founder of a renewal movement working for the eschatological restoration of Israel radicalizes the tribal ethos of the Bible.⁹³

In today’s world, where people are classified as the ‘first world,’ ‘second world’ or the ‘third world,’ that is, in purely economic terms, the spirit of sharing and egalitarianism contained in the celebration of the Feast of Merit is to be cultivated more assiduously. According to Takatemjen, the Feast of Merit can be looked upon as a “Naga response to the problem of rich and the poor.”⁹⁴

c. Diplomatic Feast: Its Demise, a Loss

We have already indicated that a ‘Diplomatic Feast’ is one held among feuding or warring villages in order to sheathe the sword and maintain friendly relations. It is a feast sealed by a ‘covenant meal’⁹⁵ and hence it could also be called a ‘covenant feast,’ or ‘a feast of friendship and reconciliation.’

In the midst of ethnic conflicts, killings, hatred and violence in which the Nagas of both Nagaland and Manipur find themselves today, the revival of this feast could pave the way for peace and harmony among the Nagas themselves and the Nagas and the other tribes or communities.

As pointed out before, the Chief Minister of Nagaland admitted to a near civil war situation prevailing among the different

underground factions of the Nagas besides the on-going conflict with the Kukis. Hence the Nagas need, today more than at any other time, to celebrate the Diplomatic Feast with others with whom they are in conflict, in one way or another.

The spirit of the feast, which is reconciliation, is in fact very biblical. It is contained in Jesus' own proclamation as he began his public ministry: "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news" (Mk 1: 14). True repentance is a change of heart and a change of heart is reconciliation; reconciliation with God, with others and with oneself.

In the 125th year of Christianity among the Nagas, a feasting remembrance of the event could be a revival of a very ancient and truly Naga as well as Christian Diplomatic feast.

4. Prohibition of Drinking Rice-Beer (*Madhu*)

a. The Attitude of the Baptist Church

In the course of our discussion on the traditional Naga society, we have frequently mentioned about the drinking of what is known as 'rice-beer.' It was more than a mere drink for the Nagas (as also for many hill tribes of Northeast India). A feast without rice-beer was unthinkable, "for what wine is to the Italian and whisky to the Scotsman, rice-beer is to the Nagas."⁹⁶ But when a Naga is baptized (in the Baptist Church) he must immediately part with his favourite drink. "Drinkers of rice-beer, the Baptists teach, will burn in hell-fire forever, and the Naga, not knowing that since the oldest times wine and beer have been drunk throughout Christendom, eschews his cherished national drink,"⁹⁷ observes Haimendorf, having caught the sentiments of the Naga Christian converts. We hear of Nagas who had changed their religion as often as seven or eight times because of their attachment to their rice-beer.

The Baptist missionaries enforced a strict ban on drinking rice-beer and with this they put a stop to all forms of animal sacrifice, tribal dances and music.⁹⁸ They advocated abstinence from drinking rice-beer or any liquor on ethical grounds and this

was almost equated with Christianity.⁹⁹ Hence, abstinence from the use of rice-beer was an important component of the new lifestyle.¹⁰⁰ The giving up of rice-beer was also considered as a sign of their new faith commitment¹⁰¹ as the drinking of it was closely associated with traditional religious festivals and lifestyle.

If we examine the Bible translations of many Naga Baptist Churches, the word 'wine' in the Bible is translated as 'grape juice' (that is without any yeast to ferment it) and from this it is shown that the Bible contains no reference to rice-beer drinking or fermented drinks. In some quarters, there is also a story that the yeast which ferments the rice-beer was made by the devil. Hence, Christians should not drink rice-beer.

b. The Attitude of the Catholic Church

While the Baptist Church demands a strict abstinence, the Catholic Church allows the drinking of rice-beer with moderation. For this reason, some Baptists say that the Catholics are not Christians because non-Christians are often called 'rice-beer drinker' (in Mao language "hayi koshomei"). The expression "there is no more rice-beer drinker in my village," meant that there were no more animists in that village and that all had become Christians.

c. The Situation Today: Most People drink

What we see today is that the youngsters of all Christian denominations drink rice-beer and other intoxicating drinks without any sense of limit and create problems in the families and society.

The Catholic youth drink in a relaxed way (since they are allowed) but the others usually drink in a hurry lest someone find out, and consequently they get drunk very easily. The ban on rice-beer had also driven some new converts towards opium which can be taken surreptitiously.¹⁰² It is also a fact that though other Christians may not be brewing rice-beer in their houses, they purchase it from the non-Christians and drink.¹⁰³ Haimendorf makes a similar observation." ... although the spirit is willing, the flesh is often weak, and not all converts find easy to remain true to their resolution; many drink secretly."¹⁰⁴ According to Horam,

rice-beer drinking made people more healthy. “Normally even today, Angamis or Chakhesangs or Maos’ health is far superior to that of other average Nagas as these tribes still drink home-brewed rice-beer as an item of their food.”¹⁰⁵

d. The Challenge: Learn to drink in Moderation

It is important, first of all, to re-capture the spirit with which rice-beer was drunk and its role in the life of the Nagas. During any kind of feast or taboo or the illness of a member of the family, a respected elderly person was called upon to bless the family. He was given a cup of rice-beer. He pours one or two drops on the ground as an offering to God with a few words of blessing. Then he would drain the cup and the housewife would pour again and again to her heart’s content.

Rice-beer also had much to do with hospitality. Anyone who comes to a family is at once given rice-beer. They would give the best brewed rice-beer to the visitor. People feel awkward to receive guests when they do not have rice-beer. It was a symbol and sign of hospitality. When people quarrel and want to reconcile too, rice-beer would be used to bring about that reconciliation.

It is true that people would use quite a bit of their paddy to make rice-beer and they would at times spend lots of time drinking rice-beer. So the ban, in many ways, was beneficial to the Nagas, especially economically. But something that was so much a part of the culture of a people cannot be so easily done away with. Besides, people in the olden days might have drunk plenty of rice-beer but they were not drunkards. They knew how to drink. Today’s youngsters do not know how to drink. They should be taught a ‘drink culture.’

It was hypocritical on the part of foreign missionaries to ban rice-beer in the name of Christianity when people in their own country never thought of banning it. To tamper with the biblical text in order to tell the tribals that the Bible forbids drinking rice-beer was not following the truth. Even for the sake of some good, lies should not be told. Besides, banning rice-beer for the

tribals while they themselves were drinking gave the impression of an attitude of mistrust and looking down on the tribals. The tribals cannot grow if treated in this way.

Finally, no government in the world has really managed to ban the drinking of some form of intoxicating drink. The solution is not banning but educating people to drink moderately, however long and arduous this process might take. With the increase in the number of drug addicts among the Naga youth, many Naga mothers are feeling that removing the ban on rice-beer and other drinks may be better than driving many of their children to drugs.

VI. CHRISTIAN IMPACT ON THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

1. Christianity did away with the Old Naga Religion

We have already briefly described the traditional Naga religion which was classified as 'animism.' Christianity brought about an overall change in the religious life of the Naga people. Their fear of spirits and superstitions have diminished. Now they have a highly developed sense of hope and salvation in Jesus Christ through the teachings of the Church.¹⁰⁶ It was largely due to the process of Christianization that the traditional and vague animistic beliefs gradually started losing their sway in the society. Christianity ushered in a transformation from animistic traditions based on superstitious practices to a more orderly society where the guiding principle was no longer that of natural human urges but rather the laws of God and love for one's fellow men.¹⁰⁷ Thus, all the traditional rituals and festivities gave way to the Christian celebrations. Rituals concerning sowing, transplanting and harvesting of the rice crop lost their importance.¹⁰⁸

This is a pity because these events are still very much part and parcel of the lives of many Nagas. Some Christian rituals or rites should be devised to replace the old ones. *Gennas* at both village and individual level are decreasingly observed. They have abandoned or ignored their traditional ideas of creation, belief

and worship and have adopted new forms.¹⁰⁹ In this process, they have simply copied the Western forms of worship or rituals with Western symbols and signs. The Nagas should express their new faith in signs and symbols of their own.

2. Have the Old Beliefs and Practices really gone?

Many Nagas, particularly in remote villages, do not seem to have quite understood their new religion. They are still influenced by their old religious beliefs and superstitions. Hence, Horam observes:

Even today, in some villages, the old methods of sacrifices are practised. To many new converts, the change from an old god to the new God does not make much difference and, at times, it makes them uncomfortable. Resting on Sundays, for example, is just as good as resting on traditional Naga *genna*.¹¹⁰

In the same way, N. Mathur, speaking about the Angami Christians, remarks:

Christian Angamis have not been able to lay off their belief in spirits and many of them still participate in the *genna*. They fraternize with non-Christians in events of feasting and hunting, on occasions of *gennas* and honour the days of commencing sowing, transplanting and harvesting paddy.¹¹¹

The same can be said of other Naga tribes too. For example, according to Mao Naga custom, commencing of sowing and transplanting of paddy has to be first initiated by the king or headman of the village. This is respected by all people from time immemorial. In a village of ninety nine percent Christians, two Christian families went against this custom. They transplanted their paddy before the headman officially initiated it. When the monsoon rains came late, the rest of the village (all Christians) interpreted this as a punishment from God because of the violation of the custom by the two families. Though no harm was done to the two families, people were enraged and ready to pull out the already transplanted paddies of these families.

This shows how deeply rooted some of these customs and practices are, even though they are considered to be the practices of the pagan past.

3. Impact of Naga Traditional Religion on Christianity

There is no doubt that Christianity has influenced the traditional life of the Nagas and changed it drastically. At the same time, there is no denying the fact that some of the traditional Naga practices have influenced the Christian practices too. A clear example is the traditional observance of *genna*. It was very strictly kept. Perhaps, this is the reason why Naga Christians keep the Sunday rest strictly. In other words, when the Nagas keep the Sunday rest, they do it in the spirit of *genna*.

VII. AN EVALUATION OF NAGA CHRISTIANITY IN GENERAL

Having discussed the impact of Christianity on specific areas of Naga society and life, we shall now turn to the evaluation of Naga Christianity as a whole. What do the Nagas think of Naga Christianity? How do the missionaries working still among them think of the same? And how do the non-Nagas think of Naga Christianity? The material of this section is largely from the interviews by the author, of the Nagas themselves and of the missionaries,¹¹² as well as from the responses to the questionnaire¹¹³ sent by the author to some people and from her own experience of Naga Christianity as a Naga herself and as a religious. The interviews conducted and questionnaires sent were not meant to elicit one word responses like 'yes/no.' We quote some of their responses in detail in the text.

1. Interviewees: Critical of Naga Christianity

Those personally interviewed were sixty in number. Among them were twenty –six missionaries, two Archbishops, two Bishops, twenty-two Priests and thirty-four lay leaders. The important question posed to those interviewed was: *What do you*

think of the Naga Christianity today? A graphic presentation of the responses is as given below:

| Response | Proud to be Christian; changed for the better. | Some are good Christians, others are not. | Skin-deep, social/fashion, materialistic. | Need faith formation, catechesis, personalization. |
|----------------|--|---|---|--|
| No. of persons | 6 | 3 | 51 | 54 |
| Percentage | 10 % | 5 % | 85 % | 90 % |

Those whom we interviewed pointed out a clear link between the critical responses of the third column of the table with that of the fourth. In other words, the reason for the shallowness of Naga Christianity is attributed to the lack of proper faith formation. In spite of the highly critical assessment given by the majority of those interviewed, there was optimism regarding the future of Naga Christianity. The critical evaluation was always accompanied by suggestions for improvement. Most of the interviewees were not merely and negatively critical but constructively critical. Hence, there is a close relation between the seemingly high negative evaluation seen in column four and the suggestions of column five. In fact, often the same people made both the criticisms and suggestions.

The significant point made for the improvement is the suggestion to make Christianity *more personal*. Many of those we interviewed spoke about finding a *personal Saviour in Christ*. We have already pointed out earlier that Naga society is largely community oriented and its Christianity too is the same. Perhaps, the Naga Christianity should bring in a little more of *personal element* in its worship and spirituality.

This is a clear and honest evaluation of the Naga Christianity as practised today. We shall give below some specific examples of what the interviewees have to say about it. One of the pioneer Catholic missionaries has this to say:

Externally, they are very active but spiritually or in sacramental life, they are just fairly good. However, very deep interior life is missing. I find that they are not eager to participate in the Mass, even on Sundays. Even in villages where there is a resident priest, they don't go for Mass. People don't feel the necessity of Mass. When one is sick, they don't call the priest, except for burial. It shows a shallow Christian life. The feeling for the Church, its institutions, and the need to improve are not there. They participate in the social life of the Church. Family prayer is absent, many don't know the prayers, or how to pray. In the church very few know the common prayers. Therefore, Christian life is very shallow.¹¹⁴

The main element pointed out in this is the shallowness of faith of Naga Christianity. Other expressions of the shallowness of Christianity among the Nagas are: 'not being fully converted,' 'Christians in name only,' 'Sunday Christians,' 'not practising Christian principles,' and other similar indications. Another interviewee says:

We have taken Christianity as a fashion, learning only how to dress, to beautify and decorate ourselves. No inner decorations with Christian principles are seen. We go about just imitating the Western style of life. The real meaning of being a Christian has not struck us. There is no root in us. That is why there is a lot of evil and corruption around us. ... Many of us are Christians only on Sundays and feast days like Christmas.... When conflicts arise, we forget our Christian identity and go back to paganism in our attitude.¹¹⁵

A leader of the Catholic Women Society expressly says:

Looking into our Naga society, we see a lot of corruption, killings, extortion, insincerity etc...I feel Christianity is not deeply rooted in us. We have accepted the faith just superficially. We do not know how to put it into practice in our everyday life ... instead of practising the faith, some people or the vast majority think, Christianity means to live an easy life.¹¹⁶

Another negative element pointed out is a lack of concern for others. "Today we have less concern for one another, for our

next door neighbour. There is no genuine Christian love. This is our Christianity today,” says I. Temsu.¹¹⁷

What Bishop Abraham Alangimattathil pointed out could be illustrative of how the majority of people we interviewed felt about the present state of Naga Christianity. According to him:

Naga Christians in general are worse than they were. They have learned many things that are due to Christianity. They have taken to stealing and to many other corrupt practices - all due to their contact with the rest of the world. Religion has not made them better since religious truths were not given to them. Believe in Jesus and do whatever you like... this is not a truth. If you believe in Jesus you must do what Jesus tells you and commands you to do.¹¹⁸

However, Bishop Abraham also saw a better future for Naga Christianity. To the question: *Judging from the past and present, what do you foresee about Naga Christianity?*, he said: “I can see that Naga Christians will improve seeing their brothers and sisters in the society.”¹¹⁹

Other features of Christianity pointed out are ‘lack of commitment to Christ’, ‘ignorance of Christian doctrines,’ ‘corruption,’ being ‘too Westernized,’ ‘individualism and selfishness (which is very much against Naga cultural value) and lack of forgiveness. There is also a feeling that the early Naga Christians were better Christians than those of the present. The role of missionaries for the betterment of Naga Christianity is also pointed out by at least six of those interviewed.

2. Respondents of Questionnaire: Critical

In order to have a little broader picture, a set of questionnaire (23 questions) was sent out to 50 people representing a cross section of the Naga society and Christianity. Forty out of 50 responded to our questionnaire. Given below are some of the findings from this questionnaire.¹²⁰ The questions more relevant to this section were questions 9, 13, 14 and 15.

Question 9. *Have you any reason to regret becoming a Christian? Q. 13. What do you think of Naga Christianity today?*

Q. 14. Do you think that Naga society has changed for the better or for worse with the influence of Christianity? and Q. 15. What kind of Naga society do you foresee in the future with the on-going impact of Christianity on the Nagas? Immediately relevant to the section were the responses from questions 13 and 14. We shall put the results of these two together. A graphic illustration of the responses is as follows:

| Responses: | Satisfactory: Faith rooted, uplift morals, peace loving. | Not Satisfactory: Nominal Christ- tians, values misplaced, too Western. | Better: In every way | Worse: Individua- listic, distributed order. |
|----------------------|---|---|----------------------------|--|
| No. of persons 40 | 2 | 38 | 36 | 4 |
| Percentage | 5 % | 95 % | 90 % | 10 % |

To the question: *What do you think of Naga Christians today?*, out of the 50 people to whom we sent out the questionnaire, 40 (=80 %) responded. Only 2 (two) respondents (= 5 %) felt that Naga Christianity is totally all right. But 38 out of 40 (= 95 %) were not satisfied with Naga Christianity as it is practised and lived today. Their strongest negative description of the present day Naga Christianity is that it has *no depth*. They expressed this in terms of being skin-deep, shallow, nominal, social Christians, Sunday/feast day Christians and being materialistic. The result of this is seen in not having picked up basic Christian values like love, peace and forgiveness. Another sign of the shallowness indicated is the fact that today Naga Christianity is largely a Western version of it. In fact, there is almost a general feeling that ‘the Catholic Church is too Roman and the Baptist Church too American’.

To the next question: *Do you think that Naga society has changed for the better or for worse with the influence of Christianity*, 36 respondents (= 90 %) felt positively that Christianity has brought about changes for the betterment of Naga society.

The expression 'Naga society is better in every way' sums up the good Christianity has done to the Nagas. The only area of doubt is in the economic field as we have already pointed out in our evaluation of the impact of Christianity on specific areas of Naga life. Only 4 (10 %) think that the changes have been for the worse. The strong feeling in this aspect is that Christianity has brought in more individualism in the Naga society which was basically community-oriented. This is significant in the light of the evaluation above. In spite of Naga Christianity not being what it should be, the Nagas do not want anything else in exchange. Christianity is not to blame; Christians are. The criticism is not aimed at doing away with Christianity but with a view to renewing Christianity in Nagaland. Hence, it can be seen in terms of a search for deepening and renewal. In fact, every negative assessment was practically accompanied by a suggestion for the betterment of Naga Christianity: even they felt that all is not lost. There is hope for Naga Christianity.

One respondent replying to question 13, remarked: "Practically I find Christianity in Nagaland a complete failure to many." According to another, "The Naga Christianity today is only theory and outward. It is comparable to a fashion." A third said: "Nagas today have misplaced values. They take religion for granted and have failed miserably to apply its teachings." To another respondent, the Naga Christians today "are too materialistic and their inclination towards others' life style is stronger". "I feel that the Naga Christians today do not have any ground (base) to identify themselves with."

Yet another response was:

Ninety percent of Nagas are now Christians. But most of us are half-hearted, half-baked, lukewarm Christians and thereby spoiling the good name of Christianity. Most of us are Christians in name and no one, even the so-called missionaries, pastors, priests, are doing their duties properly. The consequence is what we are facing now, facing a miserable, deplorable state of affairs. ¹²¹

One summarised Naga Christianity as ‘stagnant.’ It is interesting to note that the result of the questionnaire is almost exactly same as those of the personal interviews.

3. Christianity: not to blame

In spite of the almost severe indictment of Naga Christianity today, Christianity itself is not to be blamed. It has done immense good in spite of the lack of proper or adequate response from the Nagas. This was clearly shown in the response to the question 14: *Do you think that Naga society has changed for the better or worse with the influence of Christianity?*

The most significant of changes for the betterment is seen to be education. A respondent also sees this betterment in terms of widening the horizon of the Nagas. Another said: “I believe Christianity has made life more beautiful and meaningful for the Nagas. The positive impact that Christianity has brought on the Nagas is unparalleled.” One respondent also said that Christianity has influenced 75 % of the Nagas for the better and 25 % for the worse.

Many did not spell out the details of what are the changes for the better but the admission by the majority that Christianity brought about a change for the better is significant enough. While one respondent has said just “worse” without any further comment or qualification, another qualified to say that it is due to the influence of bad Christians. The third one blamed the influence of the Western culture. According to the fourth, both negative as well as positive elements are present. Educationally Christianity brought about a good change, but socially it has made the society worse.

Another question was: *Have you any reason to regret becoming a Christian?* (Q. 9). To this, cent percent of the respondents said that they have no regrets at all. This too is very significant. It shows that Christianity is not to be blamed but the Christians, the Nagas themselves, if their Christianity is not up to the mark.

4. Evaluation by non-Naga Authors: More Positive

According to S. C. Sardeshpande, the advent of Christianity brought a new hope, a new way of spiritual life, a new outlook in the Nagas.¹²² Roy Burman sees the main role of Christianity as the agent of social change among the Nagas.¹²³ Christianity also brought the Nagas together.¹²⁴ For F. S. Downs, Christianity, through humanitarian service, was responsible for helping the local Christians transcend their traditionally narrow loyalties in service to others.¹²⁵ Christianity also brought about the awareness among the Nagas of the importance of personal hygiene and cleanliness.¹²⁶ Naga Christianity, according to P. T. Philip, taught the Naga Church from the beginning to be indigenous and self-supporting.¹²⁷ One critique of Naga Christianity remarks that often tribal loyalty takes precedence over Christian principles.

The local Christians of Nagaland-Manipur have greater allegiance to his/her tribe and elders of the tribe than to any divine law or Christian principles. As a consequence, when a decision has to be made in conflicting situations, a casual onlooker can invariably predict that the tribal allegiance will have precedence over all other considerations.¹²⁸

The author tries to understand this attitude of Naga Christians in their context; all the same, it is a dark spot. It amounts to saying: "I am a Naga first, and a Christian second." A veteran Catholic missionary among the Nagas has this to say about Naga Christianity:

Having worked over 25 years in the missions I feel sad to see the condition of Christianity among the Nagas today. Much of the initial idealism has been lost. Conversions were made, baptisms registered but today I begin to wonder whether there ever was a true conversion of the heart. In the initial fervour of evangelization one gloried in the numbers baptized, villages converted. But how is one to gauge Christian life? The inadequacies of early catechesis are beginning to show forth. There isn't today any systematic catechesis whatsoever to remedy this situation. Christianity became more and more a social status symbol. Gospel values are not openly rejected

but neither are they adhered to in daily life. Christian values such as forgiveness, tolerance, respect for life, humility, etc., are not very much in evidence.¹²⁹

This criticism is very similar to the ones made by some Nagas themselves whom we interviewed and who responded to our questionnaire. The root cause, according to this assessment, lies in the lack of catechesis.

5. Naga Scholars : Equally Positive

The contribution of Christianity to the Naga society in the past 125 years has been immense. The Nagas have received much spiritually, materially, socially, culturally and educationally to a great extent from Christianity.¹³⁰ V. Sanyu, a Naga scholar, says that Christianity has played a significant role in giving the Nagas a strong sense of identity. It is in Christianity that, to some extent, the Nagas have found a place of their own, in belonging to the world Christian family.¹³¹ This is a very significant observation. The Nagas were in isolation. The Christian missionaries considered them worthy subjects for the message of the Gospel and by converting them placed them in the map of the world. Even today the Nagas are hardly known in the rest of India except for their insurgency and weird ways of life, as pointed out earlier. One of the reasons behind their struggle is to be recognized or treated as equals. Christianity made them realize their worth.

As a people moving towards modernity, Christianity has widened the horizon of the Nagas and given them a much greater exposure to the wider world.¹³² The influences of Christianity, according to P. Lokho, are numerous. It has brought about education, change in lifestyle, economy, morality and has made the tribals more service minded, this is seen in the number of priestly and religious vocations.¹³³

In spite of the shortcomings of the Naga Christians as pointed out by many, the good things Christianity has brought to the Nagas can be summed up in the words of Akum Ao:

For God so loved the Nagas that he sent his missionaries to our land. The advent of the missionaries is a milestone in the history of the Nagas, the ramifications of which we are witnessing today. They gave us not just religion but also education and a world view. Let us list the factors:

1. A common religion - Christianity, for all the Naga tribes.
2. A common lingua franca - English, to unite us linguistically.
3. The modern democratic ideals of liberty, justice, equality, etc.
4. A new socio-political awareness of our uniqueness.¹³⁴

He goes on to say, "in short, Christianity brought not only a spiritual salvation of the Nagas but also its corporeal salvation," ... and when one thinks of the missionaries, one can only say, "Thank God."¹³⁵

6. The Future: Optimists and Pessimists Equal

A question regarding the future prospects of Naga Christianity was also posed in the questionnaire: *What kind of Naga society do you foresee in the future with the on-going impact of Christianity on the Nagas?* (Q. 15). The responses are shown in the table on the next page.

The response to this question was a little more varied. What is noteworthy in this is the equal number of the optimists and the pessimists. The optimists spoke of this bright future in terms of: 'a refined Naga society,' 'good Naga society,' 'Naga society coming closer to God,' 'peace loving Naga society,' etc. One of the Catholic pioneer missionaries among the Nagas, Father John Med, speaks about a better future for Naga Christianity in this way: "The fact that among the Nagas there are souls that seek interior life of higher quality is a sign that there is a spiritual growth supported by grace. This gives hope for the future."¹³⁶

However, the opposite camp thinks that the future is quite bleak. One spoke of 'total anarchy' and 'lawlessness.' Another said: "I foresee a complete dark and cursed future for the Nagas. The Nagas have fooled and are fooling God." One (= 2.5 %) was not sure. The response was 'it is difficult to say.' Twenty-three

were hopeful but without much conviction and 11 respondents (= 27.5%) were optimistic on the fulfilment of certain conditions. The conditions they refer to are: repentance, re-dedication to Christ, renewal, taking seriously the fact of being a Christian. The fact that 12 out of 23 are optimistic but without any clear direction, show that many Nagas are not sure about the means and ways to improve their Christianity, the 11 who are articulate about the future indicate that many Nagas are sure about the remedies for a better Christian life in their society. The challenge for the missionary among the Nagas, perhaps, lies in taking the clue from these people.

| Responses | Positive: Refined/good Naga Society, closer to God, seeking interior life. | Negative: Total Anarchy lawlessness, dark, cursed future. Nagas fooling God. | Hopeful with repentance, rededication and renewal. | Not sure: difficult to say |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|----------------------------------|
| No. of persons 50 | 8 | 8 | 23 | 1 |
| 40 responded Percentage | 20 % | 20 % | 57.5 % | 2.5% |

VIII. Factors leading Nagas to Christianity

The overall evaluation of Naga Christianity seems negative. It is also an undeniable fact that the Nagas have embraced and are embracing Christianity in large numbers. It has become their religion. It is worth examining briefly the factors that led the Nagas to embrace Christianity. This may give a clue as to why the Nagas have thrown in their lot with Christianity as well as why it is wanting in quality. Did the Nagas embrace Christianity for the wrong motives? Or did they fail to understand the meaning of Christianity?

1. Political Factors

The British political officials were definitely responsible in introducing Christianity to the Nagas. They invited the American Baptists to evangelize the Nagas. The officials also gave a certain amount of support and protection to the missionaries. Captain Jenkins felt that only Christianity could change the wild and savage natives of this region.¹³⁷ However, they had no role in the actual conversion of Nagas to Christianity. To the credit of the British officials, it must be said that they did not resort to any coercion in view of conversion. If they had done so, the whole of India could have been Christians of one kind or another. On the other hand, Hindu missionaries in Manipur connived with the king to convert the Meiteis to Hinduism in 18th century

by burning 123 Meitei scripts, ... “unaccounted number of temples of the nine Umanglais (Sylvan gods presiding over villages and lineages) were also destructed,” ... “during one generation, the social, cultural and even the racial identity of the Meiteis were radically sanskritized,” ... and ‘apart from destroying temples and burning books, Garibniwaza (the king) tried to make the Meitei clan system adopt Hindu gotras, identified Meitei festivals with Hindu festivals, prohibited religious songs in the Meitei vernacular, and punished people who ate meat.’¹³⁸

2. Naga Nationalism

The Naga National Council (NNC), the first political organization which embraces all the Nagas gave them a sense of identity and unity. This made the Naga Church more involved with the Christianization of the Nagas.¹³⁹

3. Tribal Corporate Personality

Tribals may be individuals but their sense of solidarity and feeling of oneness is an inborn quality. This was a unique factor in the mass conversions to Christianity. Arun Shourie casts doubts on this kind of conversion by saying:

The conversions have little to do with an individual coming to realize that truth resides in Christianity is also suggested by the large numbers of who are converted together at the baptismal ceremony - up to 350 at one ceremony, in the figures mentioned in a recent intelligence report.¹⁴⁰

First of all, being baptized together does not mean that the decision to do so was not made individually. Secondly, even if they do, it is in the spirit of community orientation of the tribal ethos. Thirdly, one does not have to resort to intelligence reports for such things. These things are done openly and publicly.

4. Absence of Caste System among the Nagas

The classless and casteless Naga society was perfectly in tune with the Christian message of the equality of all. Contrary to this, the attitude of the Hindus of the Assam valley and that of Manipur was not favourable. In Manipur, the Hindu population of the time used to call the tribals *hao*, a derogatory name, and would not easily admit the tribals into their homes. At times, the tribals would be shoved away even from the courtyards of their houses with the expression *mange*, which means polluted. This attitude was hardly conducive to make the tribals want to be Hindus. Even if they had, they might have been relegated to the lowest rung of the ladder in the Hindu caste system.

5. A Sense of Equality, Dignity and Identity

On the contrary, the Christian missionaries treated the tribals as equals. This was a liberating experience. It made them feel recognized as equals with the missionaries. The tribals had been living in splendid isolation for centuries. Missionaries from far flung countries came and preached to them the message of Christ's love and brotherhood and made the Nagas find a place in the world family of Christians. It would have been unreasonable and foolishness on their part not to embrace Christianity.

Everything the missionaries did might not have been perfect; some of the methods they used might be questioned today but

some of the missionary methods of the 19th and early 20th centuries cannot be questioned by the standards of those of the last days of the 20th century. This is the flaw in Arun Shourie's book: *Missionaries in India*. He condemns the present day Christian missionaries by what their predecessors did in the previous centuries.

6. Promise of a Better Future

The pioneer Baptist as well as Catholic missionaries to the Nagas were ahead of their times and felt that preaching the Gospel also meant catering to the social, educational and economic needs of the people. In fact, the Baptist missionaries, as we have already seen, went against the explicit instructions of the "Home Board," and introduced the social dimensions of preaching the Gospel. To this end, they were the pioneers in introducing modern education, medical care, etc.

The pioneer Catholic missionaries too saw, from their Baptist predecessors, that preaching the Word of God should go hand in hand with works of charity. They, in fact, became champions of quality education, health care and other developmental works.

7. Zeal of the Missionaries

The pioneer missionaries, both Baptists and Catholics, were men and women of great zeal and devotion. No amount of hardships and difficulties were able to dampen their spirit. They travelled the length and breadth of Manipur and Nagaland preaching the Good News. For the Nagas, indeed for all the tribals, this was a proof strong enough to convince them that the message the missionaries preached must be good and true.

8. Religious Factors

a. Belief in the Supreme Being

However powerful and attractive the above mentioned factors might have been, the decisive factor for the Nagas to

embrace Christianity probably lies in the religious sphere. They believed in a Supreme being, called by different names among the various tribes, who in more than one way resembled God, the loving Father of all, the creator and source of everything, preached by the missionaries. According to Lal Dena,

tribals saw Christian ideas of Supreme God as referring to the Supreme Being of their animistic religion. In fact, the Christian God and the Supreme Being of their traditional religion were addressed by the same name... There was, thus, an indigenous concept of the Supreme Being which was continuous in its essentials with the Christian concept.¹⁴¹

Hector D'Souza holds a similar opinion and says: "The Supreme God preached by the missionaries was not an alien deity imposed upon the Nagas but evolved round their own generic term made universal, stabilized through the Bible."¹⁴²

b. Belief in Spirits

The Nagas also believed in a host of spirits, some good, others evil. This also finds echo in the Christian belief in good and bad angels. The Nagas were living under the constant fear of the evil spirits. Jesus Christ, the Lord and master, who made the demons do his bidding, as seen in the Gospels, must have been the answer to their fear of the evil spirits. It is said that when the pioneer Baptist missionaries in Mizoram preached about Jesus Christ as "Saviour from sin," they made no impression on the people. However, when they proclaimed Jesus as "the vanquisher of the Devil...," it was "Good News indeed and exactly met their need."¹⁴³ The same could be said about the Naga attitude to Christ. In fact, in the words of Fr. Scaria Nedumala,

the Nagas found the Gospel an agent of liberation. The people were beginning to question their traditional beliefs and practices. A vacuum was being created, and Christianity came at the appropriate time to fill this longing for change. Hinduism with its caste system and excessive ritualism was seen as retrogressive.¹⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

The author is in complete agreement with the views of the majority of the people interviewed and the respondents to the questionnaire that the present-day Naga Christianity is not what it should be. Naga Christianity is palpable in its numbers, visible in its presence along the highways and byways as well as in its institutions and denominations. But Naga Christianity in the lives of its people is only skin-deep. The ground realities prevailing among the Nagas like rampant corruption, division, violence, hatred, etc., are not the signs and symbols of genuine Christianity, not even of a genuine Naga culture.

However, the future is not entirely bleak. As one respondent to the questionnaire has aptly put it, "it lies in the hands of the Nagas."¹⁴⁵ The challenges are daunting. It is the task and duty of every Naga to face up to the challenges.

The generally admitted immense contribution of Christianity is modern education. This also needs evaluation. Is it guided by Christian principles? The Churches' contribution in the economic front has also come in for criticism. Naga Christianity is seen largely as the aping of the Western version. The challenge is to make it truly Christian and authentically Naga. According to Archbishop Joseph Mittathany of Imphal, "the Church should adapt according to the culture of the people. Inculturation should be brought in to make Christianity more meaningful."¹⁴⁶

The contribution of the early Christian missionaries to the Naga society has been unreserved. However, the present day missionaries and Church leaders are targets of criticism. Hence, the future of Naga Christianity is a challenge also to the missionaries.

All in all, the general dissatisfaction with the present day Naga Christianity is a sign of the urge, on the part of everyone, to improve it. It calls for a new way of being Christians for the Nagas. There is no better time than the quasiquicentennial year (125 years) of Naga Christianity which is at the threshold of the dawn of the third millennium, to venture into this. We shall try to spell out this way in the next chapter.

The Nagas did not accept Christianity easily, as we have already shown when we described their encounter with Christianity. M. Horam rightly says:

It was a real challenge for the Nagas to embrace foreign customs, leaving aside their own, because they loved their traditional songs and dances. They loved drinking their rice-beer which the missionaries prohibited, and adored the manly display of head-hunting which would be replaced now by Christ's love.¹⁴⁷

Many Nagas resisted the attempts of the missionaries to convert them and many too embraced Christianity in spite of the stiff oppositions from their kith and kin. Many were disowned by families and relations, others ostracized from their villages. Hence, Arun Shourie's presentation of how the missionaries converted the tribals in the Northeast en masse,¹⁴⁸ is not true. He gives a picture of where the tribals are just passive receivers of whatever the missionaries planned and did for them. Such an assessment is not true and, in fact, an insult to the tribal sense of pride in deciding their own affairs. Hence, what P. Haokip asserted for tribals in general can equally be applied to the Nagas who embraced Christianity. He says:

If the tribals have embraced Christianity en masse, for whatever reason, it was their decision, in their best interest. No one has the right to question this.... They realised the good tree of Christianity from its fruits and for that reason, they became Christians. It was and is the best thing that happened and is happening to the tribals of the North East. But for Christianity and its missionaries, they might still be roaming about the thick jungles of the region, hunting for survival and for each other's head. Of course, they might also be paraded for show on the Republic and Independence Days.¹⁴⁹

Some present-day missiologists or scholars tend to dismiss Naga Christianity saying that the Nagas embraced Christianity for purely economic or educational gains. They based their argument on the apparent lack of quality in the Christian life among the Naga Christians. However, one must be open to the following

facts. First of all, the Nagas are not the only Christians who are not living their Christian ideals. Secondly, the shallow or nominal Christianity pointed out by many Nagas themselves might be due to the almost total lack of proper faith formation for the Nagas, especially among the youth. Thirdly, if many Nagas are critical of their Christianity, it is a sign of yearning for a deepening of faith which itself is the beginning of a true Christianity. Finally, those who think that Naga Christianity is something purely sociological, economical or educational are explaining away something of the divine dimension by mere economics and sociology. Even if these had been factors, they do not go against the Christian message of caring for the whole person, body and soul. Northeast India in general, and Nagaland and the Nagas in particular, have been and still are fertile subjects for anthropologists, social scientists, political analysts and writers. The same is coming true for NGOs (non-governmental organizations) including Christian developmental agencies. Developmental agencies should try to transform the economy of the region. Projects and schemes for income generation should be encouraged. Programmes for the empowerment of the rural people to work for their own improvement should be emphasized.

ENDNOTES

1. The Quasquincentennial celebrations of Naga Christianity was held from 27-30, November, 1997, at Kohima.
2. Cf. *Directory*, Diocese of Kohima, 1995-96, p. 11.
3. Other Denominations are Pentecostals, Revivalists and Seventh Day-Adventists
4. Cf. *Directory*, Diocese of Kohima, 1995-96, p. 11.
5. There is no official act of the Government or document whereby Nagaland is proclaimed as a Christian state; but it is popularly called so.
6. It is said that the Border Road Task Force (BRTF) found that the mile stones were constantly destroyed. After they painted sign of the cross on them, the mile stones were intact.
7. H. D'Souza, *Kuknalim, The Land is Ours: A Study of Naga Rebellion*. (Unpublished pre-doctoral thesis), Department of Anthropology, Delhi University, Delhi, 1980, p. 111.

8. Cf. M. Atsongchanger, "North East India (N.E.I): Tribal Perspective," in J. Massey, ed., *Contextual Theological Education*, ISPCCK, Delhi, p. 74.
9. Ibid.
10. We have elaborated on this in the previous chapter when speaking about the ways and means of contact by both the Baptist and Catholic missionaries.
11. Cf. B. G. Verghese, *India's Northeast Resurgent: Ethnicity, Insurgency, Governance, Development*, Konark Publishers, Delhi, 1996, p. 283.
12. Cf. *Manorama Yearbook 1997*, pp. 458-459.
13. Cf. S. C. Bhatt, ed., *The Encyclopaedic District Gazetteers of India*, op. cit., p. 594.
14. Ibid.
15. Cf. Philomath Passah, "The Contribution of Christianity to Socio-economic Development of North East India," in J. Puthenpurakal, ed., *Impact of Christianity in North East India*, op. cit., p. 443.
16. Cf. V. Xaxa, "Social Impact of Evangelization in North East India," *IMR*, vol. 13, No.1, (1991) 19.
17. Cf. S. M. Dubey, "Education, Social Change and Political Consciousness among the Tribes of North East India," in K. S. Singh, ed., *Tribal Situation in India*, Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Simla, 1972, p. 283.
18. Cf. S. Karotemprel, "The Impact of Christianity on the Tribes of North East India," in J. Puthenpurakal, ed., *Impact of Christianity on North East India*, op. cit., p. 24.
19. Cf. S. Datta, "An Endangered Legacy," *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, 23 December, 1994, (n. p).
20. S. K. Barpujari, "Christianity and its Impact," art. cit., p. 109.
21. Cf. V. Sanyu, *A History of Nagas and Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 123.
22. Cf. A. Daili, *Nagas: Problem and Politics*, op. cit., p. 160.
23. M. Alemchiba, "Problems of Re-adjustment to a New Situation (with special reference to the Naga tribes)," in K. S. Singh, ed., *Tribal Situation*, op. cit., p. 483.
24. Khrieleno Terhuja, "The Christian Church among the Angami Nagas," in K. S. Singh, ed., *Tribal Situation*, op. cit., p. 299.
25. M. Horam, *North East India: A Profile*, op. cit., p. 187.
26. Cf. P. Singh, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 86.
27. Cf. B. G. Verghese, *India's Northeast Resurgent*, op. cit., p. 283.
28. Cf. B. B. Kumar, *Tension and Conflict in North East India*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi. 1995, p. 139.
29. A. K. Nongkynrih, "North East India Societies: A Sociological Diagnosis," A Paper Presented at the North Eastern Pastoral Conference, September 22-23, Shillong, 1997, p. 10.
30. Cf. B. B. Kumar, *Tension and Conflict*, op. cit., p. 140.
31. Ibid.
32. P. Singh, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 85.
33. Ibid.

34. Cf. Khrieleno Terhuja, "The Christian Church," art. cit., p. 298.
35. P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin Education, A Division of Penguin Books, Auckland, 1972, pp. 45-46.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-59.
37. T. J. Chacko, "Signs of the Times: A Reflection," *An Open Letter*, 24 September, 1996, p. 1.
38. Cf. NBCC, "The Formation of Nagaland Baptist Church Council," in A. P. Aier, ed., *From Darkness to Light*, NBCC, Kohima, 1997, p. 109. There are other Colleges like Kohima Baptist College run by Kohima Baptist Church and Oriental College by the Revival Church of Kohima, besides others run by individual Christians.
39. Cf. B. G. Verghese, *India's Northeast*, op. cit., p. 109.
40. Cf. J. J. Roy Burman, "Impact of Christianity among the Tribes of Northeast India," in S. Sengupta, ed., *Tribal Situation in North-East India*, Inter India Publications, New Delhi, 1994, p. 175.
41. Cf. IFAD, "Shifting Cultivation 'Far from Primitive,' 1.39 lakh hectares under jhum cultivation in State," *The Sentinel*, 1 June, 1997, p. 1.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*
44. Cf. P. Haokip, "Land & People: Keys to Diocesan Priestly Spirituality," *The Diocesan Priest, A Review for Pastoral Facilitation*, vol. IX, no. 1, (1997), pp. 23-24.
45. Cf. P. Haokip, "Challenges to the Church in North East India," *The Diocesan Priest, A Review for Pastoral Facilitation*, vol. VII, no. 2, (1996), p. 9. P. Haokip recounted the story of a farmer who practised jhum cultivation. He (farmer) counted every single day of labour he put in, from slashing to harvesting and carrying the paddy home and discovered that one day's labour yielded only a cup of rice. One of the most anxious things for a jhummia (jhum cultivator) is the proper burning of the slashed field. He may fix a day; but a little drizzle of rain can spoil the whole process and he cannot go on postponing indefinitely. The climate and weather in the Northeast are becoming more and more irregular due to the wide practice of jhum cultivation and this in turn makes the practice all the more uncertain and hazardous.
46. Cf. K. M., Mathew, ed., *Manorama Yearbook 1997*, pp. 650, 644, 452.
47. Cf. S. C. Bhatt, ed., *The Encyclopaedic District Gazetteers of India*, op. cit., p. 594.
48. Cf. D. Dewan, "Jamir to face CBI Probe: Indrajit Gupta gives the Nod," *North East Sun*, vol. 3, no. 7, 1-14 November, 1997, p. 6.
49. Guardian News Bureau, "Nagas must change Life-style," *The Meghalaya Guardian*, 3 October, 1997, p. 1.
50. Patricia Mukhim, "The Nagaland Lottery Swindle: A Case of Syndicated Corruption in the North East," *The Shillong Times*, 16 May, 1997, p. 4. (Patricia is the winner of the 1996 Chameli Devi Jain Award for Outstanding

Media Person, conferred by the Media Foundation, New Delhi. She is a very articulate voice of the Northeast to the rest of the country and a connoisseur of the the Northeastern scenario and a constructive critic of the same).

51. Ibid.
52. Cf. Patricia Mukhip, "The Naga Lottery Swindle" art. cit., p. 4.
53. Once, on a visit to a convent in Bangalore, I was confronted with a direct question when it was known that I was a Naga: "Are your people still cutting each other's heads?"
54. A. Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas*, op. cit., pp. 125-126.
55. K. Maitra, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 58.
56. F. S. Downs, *North East India*, op. cit., p. 15.
57. Cf. P. T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches*, op. cit., p. 165.
58. Cf. W. C. Smith, *The Ao Naga Tribe of Assam*, Macmillan & Co, London, 1925, p. 214.
59. Cf. W. C. Smith, *The Ao Naga Tribe*, op. cit., p. 219.
60. Cf. M. Alemchiba, "Problems of Re-adjustment," art. cit., p. 482.
61. Cf. P. T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches*, op. cit., p. 166.
62. J. P. Mills, *The Lotha Nagas*, op. cit., p. 104.
63. V. Sanyu, *A History of Nagas*, op. cit., p. 121.
64. Cf. P. Singh, *Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 78.
65. Cf. J. J. Roy Burman, "Impact of Christianity," art. cit., pp. 171-172.
66. PTI, "Nagaland Heading for Civil war: Jamir," *The Meghalaya Guardian*, 18 October, 1997, p. 1.
67. NSCN stands for National Socialist Council of Nagaland. IM stands for Isak and Muivah, the leaders of this faction. Isak Swu belongs to the Sema tribe and Muivah belongs to the Tangkhul Naga tribe who are mainly in Manipur. K stands for Khaplang, a Konyak Naga tribe.
68. Cf. "Nagaland Heading for Civil War," art., cit., p. 1.
69. "Naga Rebel Factions offer Truce," *The Telegraph*, (Internet edition), 15 November, 1997, p. 8.
70. Ibid.
71. "Nagas must change Life-style," art. cit., p. 1.
72. Cf. W. C. Smith, *The Ao Naga Tribe*, op. cit., p. 220.
73. Cf. H. D'Souza, *Aggression, Strategy for Survival: A Macro to Micro Level Study of Nagas of North East India with Special Reference to the Angami Nagas*, (Unpublished doctoral thesis), University of Delhi, Delhi, 1988, p. 129.
74. Cf. J. J. Roy Burman, "Impact of Christianity," art. cit., p. 169.
75. Cf. M. Alemchiba, "Problems of Re-adjustment," art. cit., p. 482.
76. C. V. Fürer-Haimendorf, *Return to the Naked Nagas*, op. cit., p. 46.
77. Cf. H. D'Souza, *Aggression*, op. cit., p. 129.
78. Cf. M. Horam, *North East India*, op. cit., p. 177.
79. Cf. W. C. Smith, *The Ao Naga Tribe*, op. cit., p. 183.

80. H. D'Souza, Interview by author, Tape recording, Shillong, September 23, 1997.
81. M. Alemchiba, "Problems of Re-adjustment," art. cit., p. 482.
82. Cf. M. Horam, *North East India*, op. cit., p. 177.
83. H. D'Souza, Interview by author, Tape recording, Shillong, September 23, 1997.
84. Takatemjem, *Studies on Theology*, op. cit., p. 24.
85. Cf. F. A. Quarishi, *Christianity in the Northeastern Hills of South Asia: Social Impact and Political Implications*, The University Press, Dhaka, 1987, p. 37.
86. Cf. C. V. Fürer Haimendorf, *Return to the Naked Nagas*, op. cit., p. 47.
87. H. D'Souza, *Aggression*, op. cit., p. 130.
88. Cf. M. Alemchiba, "Problems of Re-adjustment," art. cit., p. 479.
89. Cf. C. V. Fürer-Haimendorf, *Return to the Naked Nagas*, op. cit., p. 48.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid.
92. M. Alemchiba, "Problems of Re-adjustment," art. cit., p. 480.
93. G. Soares-Prabhu, "Anti-Greed and Anti-Pride: Mark 10: 17-27 & 10: 35-45 in the Light of Tribal Values," *Jeevadhara*, vol.24, no. 140, (1994) p. 130.
94. Takatemjem, *Studies on Theology*, op. cit., pp. 74-107.
95. Cf. L. Neli, *Christianity and Experience of the Nagas*, op. cit., p. 7.
96. C. V. Fürer-Haimendorf, *Return to the Naked Nagas*, op. cit., p. 48.
97. Ibid.
98. Cf. F. A. Quarishi, *Christianity*, op. cit., p. 36.
99. Cf. Terhuja Khrieleno, "The Christián Church," art. cit., p. 299.
100. Cf. F. S. Downs, *North East India*, op. cit., p. 149.
101. Ibid.
102. Cf. W. C. Smith, *The Ao Nagas*, op. cit., p. 207.
103. Cf. N. Mathur, "Religious Ethos of the Angami Naga" in S. M. Channa, ed., *Nagaland: A Contemporary Ethnography*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1992, p. 142.
104. C. V. Fürer-Haimendorf, *Return to the Naked Nagas*, op. cit., p. 48.
105. M. Horam, *North East India*, op. cit., p. 208.
106. Cf. P. T. Philip, *The Growth of the Baptist Churches*, op. cit., p. 203.
107. Cf. V. Sanyu, *A History of Nagas*, op. cit., p. 118.
108. Cf. J. Jacobs et al., *The Nagas*, op. cit., p. 174.
109. Cf. M. Horam, *North East India*, op. cit., p. 204.
110. Cf. M. Horam, *North East India*, op. cit., p. 204.
111. N. Mathur, "Religious Ethos," art. cit., p. 144.
112. The Nagas interviewed, though few in number, are prominent lay leaders. Most of the missionaries interviewed are pioneer missionaries among the Nagas.
113. Analysis of responses to the questionnaires sent by the author to various

- people are given in the Appendix II.
114. P. Bianchi, Interview by author, Sajoba, December 26, 1996.
 115. M. J. Odyuo, Interview by author. Tape recording, Kohima, August 15, 1997.
 116. Helena Sobounuo Belho, Interview by author, Tape recording, Kohima, July 12, 1997.
 117. I. Temsu Ao, Interview by author, Kohima, July 17, 1997.
 118. A. M. Alangimattathil, Interview by author, Dimapur, August 26, 1996. (Bishop Abraham Alangimattathil died on November 19, 1997).
 119. Ibid.
 120. A more detailed analysis of the questionnaire is given in Appendix II.
 121. Respondent No. 25 to General Questionnaire No. 13.
 122. Cf. S. C. Sardeshpande, *The Patkoi Nagas*, Daya Publishing House, Delhi, 1987, p. 79.
 123. Cf. J. J. Roy Burman, "Impact of Christianity," art. cit., p. 168.
 124. Cf. S. K. Barpujari, "Christianity and its Impact," art. cit., p. 109.
 125. Cf. F. S. Downs, *North East India*, op. cit., p. 182.
 126. Cf. W. C. Smith, *The Ao Nagas*, op. cit., p. 199.
 127. Cf. P. T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches*, op. cit., p. 193.
 128. C. Kallikaden, Letter to the author, Dimapur, February 28, 1997.
 129. S. Nedumala, Interview by author, Dibrugarh, July 7, 1997.
 130. Cf. Y. Aier, "Thought of the Year," *Nagaland Post*, 13 March, 1997, p. 6.
 131. Cf. V. Sanyu, "Christian Impact," art. cit., p. 512.
 132. Respondent No. 20 to General Questionnaire No. 14.
 133. P. Lokho, Letter to the author, Guwahati, July 7, 1996.
 134. A. Ao, "Metamorphosis: The Advent of Missionaries is a Milestone in Naga History," *North East Sun*, vol. 3, no. 8, 15-30 November, 1997, p. 27.
 135. Ibid.
 136. J. Med, Letter to the author, Imphal, August 31, 1996.
 137. Cf. P. T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches*, op. cit., p. 170.
 138. S. Oinam, "Burning of Meitei Scripts Commemorated," *Northeast Telegraph*, 22 January, 1998, p. 6.
 139. Cf. L. Neli, *Christianity and Experience of the Nagas*, op. cit., p. 14.
 140. A. Shourie, *Missionaries in India: Continuities, Changes, Dilemmas*, ASA Publications, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 206-207.
 141. L. Dena, *Christian Missions*, op. cit., p. 88.
 142. H. D'Souza, *Aggression*, op. cit., p. 148.
 143. Thanzauva and R. L. Hnuni, "Ethnicity, Identity and Hermeneutics: An Indian Tribal Perspective," in B. M. Brett, ed., *Ethnicity and the Bible*, Brill, Leiden, 1996, p. 348.
 144. S. Nedumala, Interview by author, Dibrugarh, July 7, 1997.
 145. Respondent No. 21, to General Questionnaire No. 15.
 146. J. Mittathany, Interview by author, Imphal, August 3, 1997.

147. M. Horam, *North East India*, op. cit., p. 201.
148. Cf. A. Shourie, *Missionaries in India*, op. cit., pp. 200-242. See also reviews of the book by Khuswant Singh, "Eating Missionaries," *The Week*, 12 June, 1994, pp. 20-21, and Mani Shankar Aiyar, "Mission of Hate," *Frontline*, 17 June, 1994, pp. 16-17.
149. P. Haokip, "Identity and Integration: From the Perspective of Tribals of North East India," *Jeevadhara*, vol. 27, no. 157, (1997), p.10.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHALLENGES: DREAMS AND REALITIES

INTRODUCTION

The third chapter of our work can be described as having been characterized by three main features. The first is the dissatisfaction about the present state of Naga Christianity. The second can be seen as the unwillingness to exchange Christianity for anything else, in spite of being not happy with it, and the third element is the almost unlimited optimism and hope of a better and brighter future for Naga Christianity.

In this chapter, we shall address the issue of the hope for the future. However, hope for the future cannot be realized unless the ground realities are taken into account and ways and means are thought of to remove the obstacles on the way. We shall, therefore, deal also with the challenges which are the ground realities facing Naga Christianity today. These ground realities are obstacles as well as opportunities for the realization of the goal. We shall, however, look at these challenges in the context of the hope and aspirations of the Nagas. Hence, the hopes and aspirations will be addressed first. Looking at it this way, the seemingly daunting challenges and obstacles may appear less so.

This chapter, on the challenges, dreams and realities, will mainly be based on the responses from the youth to our questionnaire. A questionnaire was sent out to 112 Naga college, university and research students. The table showing the different groups of students who responded is as follows:

| Respondents | Researchers | Post-graduates | Graduates | Under-graduates |
|-------------|-------------|----------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Total: 60 | 3 | 34 | 15 | 6 |
| Percentage | 5% | 56.66% | 25% | 10% |

These students too were critical of the present state of Naga Christianity. In fact, out of 60 respondents, 55 (91.66 %) were not satisfied with Naga Christianity as practised today. However, they were optimistic about the future. To the question: *Describe in a few words the Church of your dream (your ideal Church) for the third millennium (Q. 14)*, the students were quite clear and articulate. As these students are the future leaders of Naga society, we present below their vision of a new Naga Christianity, and the ways and means to realize these.

| Responses | New Church: | Love & Unity | Peace and harmony; | Personal Christianity |
|----------------|---|--|---|--|
| | Centre of life, animating, transforming, missionary, ecumenical, etc. | Full of love no hatred, presence of Jesus' love, brotherhood/sisterhood. | No revenge, no conflict, but reconciliation & healing, etc. | Personal renewal, personal Saviour, etc. |
| No. of persons | 41 | 37 | 13 | 7 |
| Percentage | 68.3 % | 61.6 % | 21.6 % | 11.6 % |

Though we have pointed out that only 60 out of 112 responded, the table above shows that a total of 98 have responded. This is because some have put down more than one image of their ideal Church while others (five) did not make any comment. We could say that out of 98 responses, 41 referred to matters relating to the Church, 37 dealt with the question of love and unity, 13 spoke of peace and harmony, while 7 are on the personalization

of Christianity. The chart shows only the main elements of the ideal Church visualized by the Naga youth.

In this new vision, the Church will be different from the present one. It will be more ecumenical, at the service of society, sharing and caring, more holy, more united, peaceful and harmonious, loving and tolerant. In other words, it will be a Church based on Christian values and guided by Christian principles. It will be a Church which builds up the Kingdom of God here on earth to be fully realized in the eschatological times. We shall spell out these and other ideals of the youth in the following pages.

I. DREAMS OF A NEW NAGA CHURCH

The table above shows that the majority of the respondents are concerned with the state of the Naga Church. This is because of the important role the Churches in Nagaland have played in the past and can play in the future too.

1. The Church: Centre of Life

One respondent to our questionnaire compared the new Naga Church to the sun in our solar system around which every planet revolves. In the same way, every aspect of Naga life and society should go around the Church drawing inspiration, energy and activity from it. It would neither be purely theocratic nor merely secular. In the true Naga traditional society, there is no separation between the sacred and profane. Everything is sacred and profane at the same time. Life is one whole, truly human and potentially filled with dimensions of the divine.

2. A Church that animates

The Church of a new Naga Christianity should be 'less institutional' and 'more people oriented' according to the youth. A new Naga Church would be one which centres around people, their needs and aspirations. It would invest more on the animating, training, guiding and empowering of people, with a view to

building up individuals and communities of people rather than on magnificent edifices and structures.

3. A Caring and Sharing Church

The new Naga Church would be one like that of the early days of Christianity as seen in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2: 43-47) in which there will be no rich and poor, but all will share and care for each other, especially the needy. This is very much in tune with the ethos of the traditional Naga society where there was no distinction between the rich and the poor, where the rich would share their wealth with all, like in the celebration of the Feast of Merit. People will not merely be sharing material goods but their sorrows, joys and hopes. The Church also would care for sinners and would liberate people from all kinds of alienation. It will be a Church where there will be not conflicts, hatred, groupism, partiality or self-centredness.

4. A Church: The Conscience of Society

In the new Naga Christianity, the Churches will stand firmly on the principles and values of the Gospel and guide people in right living and will not be afraid to stand up to the rich and powerful in order to uphold Christian values and principles.

5. A Participatory Church

Though a certain hierarchical structure cannot be avoided in the Church, the new Naga Church will be where all its members can have a say in the decision making process. This would be in complete agreement with the decision making process of the traditional society. The traditional society too had chiefs, elders and other leaders fulfilling certain functions for the community. But when an important decision affecting the village or community had to be made, the opinions of everyone representing families, clans and tribes were heard first. Only after this procedure would a final decision be taken. In this way, the implementation of the decision was easy as it was their own, each one's own decision.

6. A Church that is Missionary

The new Naga Christian Church should essentially be missionary. The Nagas have been brought the message of Christ by missionaries from distant lands. The Naga Christians should also be willing to preach the Good News of the Gospel to other lands and peoples.

7. A Church that recognizes the Gifts and Talents of People

The uniqueness of the Northeastern region and its peoples, their gifts and talents, is widely recognized and accepted. The Nagas, in particular, have their distinctive character of being fiercely loyal to and proud of their identity. These should be recognized and other qualities identified. The new Church must build upon these unique features.

8. A More Ecumenical Church

The new Naga Christian Church must not emphasize on the denominational differences but make every effort to unite the Churches in their common bond in Christ and his values. Naga Christianity must go beyond the boundaries of belonging to particular denominations or Churches. In fact, some respondents visualized the new Naga Church as 'non-denominational and worshipping in spirit and truth.' It should engage itself in the cultivation and realization of the values of the kingdom of God on earth. A Naga, in the new and more ecumenical Church, will be first and foremost a Christian, a true disciple of Christ; then a Catholic, a Baptist or any other.

9. A Church which nurtures New Leadership

A society which is by and large Christian expects the Church to be in the forefront of every aspect of life. Hence, the Naga youth expect the Church to take the lead in training and building up people to be leaders. The Churches must play the role of

nurturing and fostering leadership qualities in people. In this, the Church leadership should lead by example.

a. Leadership at the Service of the People

The new Naga Christianity needs dedicated leaders who think less of themselves and more of the community. Thus, they would inspire people by their life and service. Leaders who have vision for the welfare of people, who inspire confidence and trust in times of crisis and difficulties, and who will not be hungry for power but serve, are the ones looked forward to in the new Naga Christian society.

b. Leadership that knows the Felt-Needs of the People

Often the ministries or apostolates in the Churches tend to be determined by leaders and the ordinary people's needs are not taken into account. But in the participatory Church, the ministries and apostolates of the Churches will be fully determined by the felt-needs of the people. In this way, the people will fully respond to the services rendered to them.

c. A Leadership that empowers

The quality of new Naga leaders will consist in their ability to delegate power, to train people to become leaders. If they are leaders and have power, it will be the people's power which is delegated to them to exercise for the benefit of the people. Another feature of their leadership will be the care and concern they have to train future leaders who will take their places at the helm of the affairs of the society and the Church. These new leaders will be people who give birth to another generation of leaders.

10. A Fully Naga Church

The Nagas are generally very proud of being called Naga and of whatever is their own. One of the reasons why they are critical of the present state of Christianity among them may be

because it is not yet their very own. It has not been their own flesh and blood. Hence, the youth want Naga Christianity to be fully Naga. In fact, the majority of the youth feel that Christianity should be in harmony with Naga culture. To the question: *Should Naga Christianity/Churches be truly in harmony with authentic Naga culture?*, (Q.13), the reply of the majority was that it should be.

11. A Fully Renewed Church

Jesus Christ inaugurated his public ministry by proclaiming the core of his message: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near/is at hand; repent and believe in the good news”(Mk 1:15). Hence repentance, change of heart or conversion is the key word. Therefore, a new vision of Naga Christianity is that in which the Nagas are fully converted, with a new heart and a new spirit. It will be a freedom from whatever alienation the Nagas suffer from, and complete reconciliation with God, and among themselves.

12. A Transforming Church

Naga Christianity will not only be completely transformed but it will also be an agent of transformation. This is something in line with true Naga value. The identity of a Naga does not lie in his/her being in isolation but in relation to others. Hence, a true Naga Christian will be someone who shares his/her experiences with others; enriches others and gets enriched.

13. A Church where Holiness flourishes

Another vision of a new Naga Christianity will be one which is characterized by holiness of life. It will be the experience of the presence of Christ, of God’s love and peace and the acceptance of Christ as a personal Saviour. Spiritual maturity and strength will be seen and every one will be encouraging and supporting each other to stand firm in the faith. Brotherly/sisterly love and forgiveness will be the distinguishing marks of its members. The community will be a humble, worshipping, praising and thanking

community of believers. True Christian values will be seen and practised. The community will be fed by the Word of God and it will be translated into real life. The community will also be numerically cent percent Christian, a real Christian state where there will be a true balance between religious orthodoxy and openness to the modern world.

II. UNITY, LOVE AND PEACE

The next most cherished dream of the Naga youth is unity, unity among the different tribes and the different Churches. It would be an utopian dream to speak about the unity of the Nagas under one tribe or one Church. However, what is feasible and desirable and towards which all must strive for, is unity in diversity.

1. Unity in Diversity

The Naga society, as already pointed out, is a kaleidoscope of various tribes, cultures, languages and customs. Often the only thing that unifies them is the common nomenclature 'Naga.' The first vision envisaged is a unity as seen in a mosaic where each tribe, whether big or small, is given recognition and respect and is seen in relation to the whole.

2. Unity without Distinction of Class and Status

The traditional Naga society was classless/casteless. People held different status in the society but that did not make them belong to a different category. Equality was the hallmark of the society. In the new vision too, this will be the case. It will be a recapturing of the traditional value of equality. Everyone will be respected and treated equally, not in terms of the position one holds, but for what the person is.

3. Unity of Universal Brotherhood/Sisterhood

Brotherhood/sisterhood in the traditional Naga society was mainly confined within the boundaries of tribe and clan. People

outside these boundaries were often considered as outsiders and even enemies. In the new Naga society, all men and women of good will would be their brothers and sisters. The Nagas, in turn, will also be brothers and sisters to these, irrespective of their race, colour and creed.

4. Love and Tolerance

The desire for practice of love and tolerance was the third most cherished dream of the Naga youth. Like the concept of brotherhood/sisterhood, the concepts of love and tolerance in the traditional Naga society too were confined to those within the clan or the tribe. One was bound by duty to love and tolerate these. However, in the new Naga Christian society love and tolerance should go beyond these boundaries.

5. A Peaceful and Harmonious Society

The past fifty years of Naga society have been turbulent. The youth have not experienced much of peace. Hence a peaceful and harmonious society is one that is uppermost in their minds. Peace has two dimensions, the absence of conflict and the positive aspect of a harmonious living together.

The Naga society has been going through the trauma of being broken and wounded by factional fighting among the different militant groups, and this has also affected the various Naga communities. The recent ethnic conflict between the Nagas and the Kukis has been responsible for the loss of many innocent lives. The new vision of a Naga society is to bring about reconciliation among the warring factions among the Nagas and among the Nagas and the Kukis. Hence, reconciliation which will bring about normalcy is a must. The wounds and scars inflicted by ethnic violence are deep, and it will take time for them to heal. Initiatives to quicken the process of healing should be undertaken. Until and unless these wounds are healed and people are reconciled, genuine Christianity will be impossible.

III. A MORE PERSONAL CHRISTIANITY

If one were to characterize Christianity among the Nagas, the communitarian aspect will be the strongest contender. No doubt, this has strong roots in the pages of the New Testament Christianity. However, the Naga youth, and others too, feel that the personal element should also be equally stressed. This idea is expressed in terms of ‘accepting Christ as one’s personal Saviour and Lord.’ It means that one should be so personally committed to Christ and his values that one would be ready to stand up against even the wishes of one’s clan or tribe when confronted with the dilemma of choice between the values of Christ and those of the tribe or clan which at times may be in conflict with those of the former. It should be like the sentiments of Paul:

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ... (Phil. 3: 7-8)

IV. ECHOES OF THE YOUTH’S DREAM

This yearning for peace, unity and harmonious co-existence of the youth finds its echoes in the front pages of newspapers, magazines and writings in the state and the region. The powerful Naga Students’ Federation (NSF) declared at the beginning of 1997 that ‘gun culture would not bring any solution of the Naga political problem’ and expressed the hope that 1997 would be a year of reconciliation and renewal of friendship.¹ “United we stand, divided we fall,”² declared the leading daily of Nagaland. “Unity a must,”³ was another slogan. “Let peace live,”⁴ is another headline. The author argues that “the Nagas’ craving for peace and unity is enormous, this undeniable element which needs to be cherished by millions must be given a chance to survive.”⁵ “Give peace a chance,”⁶ “Nagas: One people,”⁷ “Shun violence and work for peace,”⁸ “NSF urge reconciliation,”⁹ and “APO (Angami Public Organisation) support for peace talk”¹⁰ which urged “Naga leaders

to give up their differences so as to evolve an acceptable solution of the long standing issue.”¹¹ The *Naga Hoho*, the highest Naga body, is also very much keen on restoring unity among the Nagas. In a recent appeal to all the insurgent groups and factions, it called to “immediately stop killing, ambushing, attacking, kidnapping and operating against one another.”¹² The same body also demanded the extension of the cease-fire between the insurgents and the Centre with the hope that they would be able to bring about unity among the different factions.¹³ Dr. Dietho-o, a member of the Naga Hoho also shares his wishes for “a new Nagaland to be born,” in which he says “now is the time when we can try to get a fresh look of the past and prepare ourselves anew for the future.”¹⁴ He goes on to say:

What is required now is more interaction and exercise of mind, more clarity of vision, more courage as well as tolerance. The practical aspects and painful realities need to be accepted. The challenges must be met, the wounds healed. Above all, we have to be convinced that every problem carries the seeds of its own solution. So is our Naga problem.¹⁵

In order to bring about a change, Dr. Dietho-o calls upon all the Nagas to contribute their share and says: “All of us, big or small, high or low, must contribute some light. Prepare ourselves to make some sacrifices, take pain and courage to do something positive, constructive and creative. ... The Nagas must have a complete paradigm shift of our attitude from now on.”¹⁶

These are expressions of the Nagas yearning for peace. Naga scholars too have the same yearning. According to Horam, though the Nagas are today separated for reasons of administrative and other conveniences, there is a tremendous social and political intercourse among them. Inter-tribal marriages are on the increase and there is a feeling of solidarity and brotherhood.¹⁷ He goes on to say that whatever differences may divide them, the Naga youth, especially students, have a deep sense of unity. These young and broad minds dwelling on similarities rather than on differences are all for accenting the cultural affinity of the Naga tribes. Their zeal for unity often puts to shame those older Nagas and their

total lack of vision.¹⁸ The Nagas strongly feel that they have been wrongly separated by the frontiers made by the British and the Indians. But “blood is thicker than an imaginary line. It is natural that a people divided by foreigners suffer immensely but sooner or later they are always reunited. The reunification of the Nagas will be a historical necessity.”¹⁹ M. Aram, way back in 1972, had pointed out the “growing love of peace and normalcy”²⁰ as the first sign of change emerging in Nagaland.

The same sentiments are shared by non-Naga observers of the region. “The troubled North-east: Search for peace,”²¹ “Need of the hour is peace,”²² “Heralding peace in Nagaland,”²³ and “Do the bells finally toll for peace?”²⁴ are all indications of a deep yearning for peace and harmony shared by all in the region with their Naga brothers and sisters. In fact, “growing pressure of Naga public opinion for restoration of peace has undoubtedly cleared the decks for meaningful confabulations in place of armed conflict and confrontation.”²⁵ The noted writer, B. G. Verghese, sums up the Naga sentiment when he says: “Common identity as Nagas and a strong sense of oneness and a search for a more exclusive identity continues to be the aspiration of the Nagas today.”²⁶

These are the dreams of the Naga youth of today and that of every Naga who loves his/her society and Church. Every aspect of these dreams may not be realized in the near future. But these dreams are ideals that will guide the Church in its journey to the third millennium. Every Naga expects a better new millennium. Christianity which has brought about tremendous changes for the better in the Naga society during the last hundred and twenty-five years has a daunting task ahead. However, these dreams or visions cannot be realized without taking into account the ground realities: the challenges that face the Naga society and Church. Given below is a graph of what the Naga youth think are the challenges. What we shall spell out below are largely based on the responses of the youth.

To the question (Q.9) *What are the challenges facing Naga Christianity/your Church for the next century? Name in order of*

priority, the youth named a varied number of challenges. The chart below gives, at a glance, the various challenges.

| Responses | Lack of peace, unity, harmony due to insurgency, ethnic conflict, factional fighting, etc. | Crisis in leadership: Power hungry, sel-centred, corrupt. | Tradition Vs modernity: loss of tradition, materialism, consumerism, Westernization | Christian life a hallow, lack of faith formation, one sided, lack of contextual theology, unecumenical. |
|------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Total No. of responses | 21 | 15 | 26 | 82 |
| Percentage | 14.58 % | 10.41 % | 18.05 % | 56.94 % |

Since the question was not aimed at eliciting answers of one word or expression per person, the responses outnumbered the respondents. Hence, we have given the percentage against the total number of responses, instead of the total number of respondents.

V. THE CHALLENGE OF ELUSIVE PEACE

The desire for peace and unity among the Nagas is one of the most cherished dreams of the Naga youth today. However, the most distinguishing mark of Nagaland and other Naga inhabited areas of Manipur is the lack of peace. In spite of the peace efforts initiated by the Government of India in agreeing to talk with the Naga rebel leaders and the subsequent declaration of suspension of operations with effect from 1st August 1997, peace seems to be still elusive.²⁷ Though there was peace between the security forces and the rebels, there was no peace among the rebels themselves. The NSCN (K) did declare a unilateral cease-fire on the occasion of the declaration of Naga Independence by A. Z. Phizo²⁸ 50 years ago, ‘in the interest of peace and Naga unity;’ but the NSCN (I-M) responded by attacking its rival faction in Chuchu Impang village in Mokokchung district.²⁹ It only goes to show how difficult the path to peace in Nagaland is. The NSCN

chieftains are in no mood to forget and forgive their arch factional rivals, who had organised a bloody coup against them in 1988. In the bloodbath, 182 Naga rebels, mostly supporters of Muivah and Swu, were killed.³⁰ The absence of peace is very well summarised by Rev. Aier, an Ao Naga, who states: "At Balasore, where I work, 99 per cent of the people are not Christians. Yet, shops remain open till midnight and I can walk around freely. Here in Nagaland, 95 per cent of the people are Christians. Yet, shops close at 4 p.m. and everything is dark."³¹ During the first phase of cease-fire between the Naga rebels and the security forces, there was an increase in factional fighting among the militants, and official figures say that 115 people were killed during this period. The unofficial figure is higher.³² The cessation of hostilities between the Indian army and the rebels is still on, but no one is sure whether it will be permanent. But factional fighting among the different Naga groups goes on, though there was a little respite on the occasion of the celebrations of the 125 years of Christianity towards the end of November 1997. Hence, in this context, one cannot but agree with Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil of Guwahati, who speaks of "Peace: an urgent need today"³³ and "Becoming Peacemakers: The Greatest Challenge Today"³⁴

1. Insurgency

One of the stumbling blocks on the road to peace and unity so much desired by the Nagas has been insurgency. According to the noted anthropologist, B. K. Roy Burman,

insurgency is a circuit of reciprocal violence, where the main players are the state establishment and the challengers of the same. Insurgency is protracted armed struggle conducted methodically step by step in order to obtain specific immediate objectives leading finally to the overthrow of the existing order³⁵

Naga insurgency can be called the 'mother of all insurgencies in Northeast India.' It has been around for the past 40 years. Scores of books and numerous articles have been written on Naga insurgency and other insurgencies in the region. For the Naga militants, insurgency is a patriotic movement to gain

recognition and independence from the oppressive rulers in New Delhi. In fact, they consider themselves “pilgrims in the turbulent journey towards, what they think to be, just society, good society, liberated humanity.”³⁶

2. Missed Opportunities

The Naga leaders always maintained that Mahatma Gandhi was sympathetic to their cause. He once told Phizo and his acolytes:

If I ever go there (Nagaland), I will teach you how to spin, weave cloth. You grow cotton but import clothes from outside. You should learn all type of handicrafts. This is the peaceful way of gaining independence. If you use rifles, guns and tanks that will be foolishness³⁷

Phizo also claimed that he met Mahatma Gandhi on July 18-19, 1947, at Bhangi Colony in Delhi and demanded the independence of Nagaland. According to Phizo, Gandhiji “assured him that the Naga demand would be considered sympathetically and also advised the Nagas to shun the path of violence. This chapter, however, ended with the death of Gandhi”³⁸

However, the stand of the then Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru, was quite different. In fact, he was considered the greatest obstacle to Naga independence. A three member Naga delegation met Nehru in New Delhi on March 11, 1952. Nehru straightaway rejected the demand for an independent Nagaland. In the same year in July, Phizo met the touring Nehru at Dibrugarh and got the same reply.³⁹ Nehru is reported to have even said that “even if the heavens fell or India went pieces, Nagaland would not become independent.”⁴⁰ The Nagas did not give up easily. They made their demand again when Nehru visited Kohima on March 30, 1953. When he did not listen to them, many Nagas left halfway through the meeting. Nehru got offended and never came back to Nagaland again.⁴¹ Even if he was not willing to accede to the full demand of the Nagas, a sincere show of willingness to dialogue with them might have changed the course of history in Nagaland. A man who had fought so long for independence from

a foreign rule was expected to have a more sympathetic ear for the Naga cause. To add insult to injury, Nehru followed, almost blindly, the advice of his friend, Verrier Elwin, an anthropologist, who advocated the policy of "let them alone."⁴² The policy of isolation resulted in the total neglect of the area and the people. The advice of Verrier Elwin is also the reason for the general suspicion on the part of the Indian Government in general, on the missionaries working among the tribals of the North-east, for according to Elwin, the missionaries were destroying the culture of the tribals.⁴³

The Peace Commission consisting of Jayaprakash Narayan, Chaliha and Scott had suggested a peaceful settlement (December 20, 1964). It suggested that the 'Federal Government' itself could decide to join the Indian Union after mutual discussion. The Indian Government could determine what type of administration would be able to fulfil the political hopes of the Nagas.⁴⁴ The Naga underground leaders demanded the recognition of their right to self-determination by India but the Indian Government would not give in to this. Another opportunity missed was the Peace Agreement signed in 1975 in Shillong. According to Kuldeep Nayar, New Delhi had

a carrot and stick policy. It was able to force the underground Nagas to the negotiating table. A Peace agreement was signed in 1975 in Shillong. The accord said the Naga leaders, 'of their own volition, without condition accept the Constitution of India' and agreed to 'surrender arms and to formulate in due course of time other issues for the final settlement.' Not all the Naga leaders accepted the accord; Phizo and Muivah were among them. But New Delhi also did not 'formulate other issues' for the final settlement.⁴⁵

Yet another opportunity lost, according to K. Nayar, was in 1990 when Khodao-Yanthan, Phizo's old comrade-in-arms returned to India. He was returning to India with the idea of advising his old friends to give up arms and seek a solution within the framework of united India. Phizo, by then, was already dead but Yanthan was on a mission according to the wishes of his old friend.

But he was brushed aside in Delhi and he came back a disappointed man and so put his weight behind NSCN(M).⁴⁶ It is not only the Nagas who feel that New Delhi has followed a policy of oppression. In fact, Kuldip Nayar too is of the same opinion. He says:

While New Delhi's earlier policy was purely oppression, violating all human rights, now it is sheer money, which is spreading like water. When I visited the area two years ago, I found that the problem was that too much money had been pumped in; ministers and so-called leaders had laced their purses, leaving too little for development or employment. This has revived NSCN (M), which had very little support even three or four years ago⁴⁷

This is true because the period from the late seventies to the early eighties were comparatively peaceful. Insurgency has also been beneficial to some local political leaders. According to Patricia Mukhim, "it profits them to keep insurgency alive in their respective states, because no insurgency means no money. As someone has rightly said, insurgency has become an industry and extortion as a business in some of the North Eastern States"⁴⁸

When General Choudhary was Chief of the Army, he admitted that "sheer force has not been able to solve insurgency and for that a process of positive dialogue has to be initiated."⁴⁹ The dialogue initiated by the Deve Gowda Government and carried forward by the Gujral Government⁵⁰ with the declaration of cessation of operations between the Indian security forces and the rebels is a sincere realization that a people's genuine aspirations and hopes cannot be suppressed by mere force, however powerful it might be. The NSCN(I-M) has clearly gained international recognition when it became a member of the 'Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) in 1993. It can create more problems if not tackled now. Today it is possible to find a solution within the Indian Union; tomorrow it may be too late.⁵¹

3. The Role of the Churches

The Christian Churches and missionaries have often been accused of inciting insurgency and breeding separatism in the

Northeast in general, and Nagaland in particular. Leaders of organizations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad say: “the Christian missionaries were instigating the common people, seeking to create a sovereign state and were instrumental in providing all logistic international backdoor support to the Naga insurgents...”⁵² In the same way, Arun Shourie, in his book *Missionaries in India* says that “intelligence information received by Government establishes the help and guidance which specific missionary groups have been giving to secessionist groups in Nagaland and Manipur. Specific information points to their association with insurgent groups...”⁵³ This kind of suspicion is in the minds of Government officials, security and intelligence personnel working in the Northeast. Missionaries are, at times, suspected by them; or they are friendly with the missionaries with a view to finding out their links with the insurgents. However, a fact “noteworthy is that the Northeastern tribal leadership almost to a man repudiated the idea of a markedly Christian-tribal Crown Colony covering the Northeast, Mynmar and the Chittagong Hill Tracts with Chittagong as an outlet to the sea, that was advocated by an influential lobby of the British bureaucrats.”⁵⁴ Another variant was proposed by Reginald Coupland, adviser to the Cabinet Mission which was the notion of a North East Frontier Province taking in Sikkim, Bhutan and the Northeast. This too was rejected outright.⁵⁵ What is unknown or ignored is the fact that some leading Baptist Church leaders like Rev. Longri Ao, Kenneth Kerhguo and Michael Scott were actively involved in the Peace Mission of the early sixties.⁵⁶ Michael Scott was deported from India on May 4, 1966, “for his attempt to turn the Naga problem into an international issue and his partisan conduct...,”⁵⁷ Being a foreigner, he was an easy target. The reason for the problem not being solved till date is, perhaps, because the Indian Government refused to listen to people who were sympathetic to the Naga cause.

The Catholic Church is a late comer on the Naga scene. It has been keeping itself aloof from the issue so far, a passive onlooker as it were. The reason may be the fear of being seen to be anti-Indian and encouraging secessionist tendencies among the

Christians. The attitude of the Catholic Church may be seen as overcautious rather than being involved. The time has, perhaps, come for the Catholic Church to take a more active role in this tangle. The majority of the missionaries of the Catholic Church at the moment are from Southern India. They have a good standing in the eyes of the people as well as of the Government. They enjoy the status of being the neutral third party. As people closely involved in the well-being of the Naga society, they are in a position to decipher the legitimate longings and aspirations of the people hidden behind the externally violent form of the armed struggle. Thus they can be goodwill ambassadors of the people to the Government authorities. At the same time, they are also able to see the situation in a more objective manner and be able to guide the people in ways different from the present violent struggle.

The tendency of some Central Government officials and others of putting the blame on the missionaries and the Christians for all the ills in the Northeast seems more of an escapism and the neglect and step-motherly treatment meted out to the people of the region. If one looks closely at the ground realities, the Government machinery may be more blameworthy. In fact, what seems more probable is that the Central Government and its security forces are not really interested in solving the problem of insurgency in the Northeast in general, and that of the Nagas in particular. The security forces who outnumber the insurgents many times over, are not unaware of who and where the insurgent leaders are. There are hardly any direct encounters between the forces and the rebels. When the army knows about the presence of the militants in a village or a hide out, they give them sufficient time to make their escape before they go in. When the insurgents are asked as to how they manage to get ammunition, they would say often that their sources are the security forces themselves. Hence, if people like Arun Shourie were to live in these troubled parts of the Northeast, he would realize that it is not the missionaries nor the Christians who are responsible for the continuance of insurgency; it is rather the Government, Central as well as the state machinery which is interested in keeping insurgency alive.

The logic behind may be: it is easier to keep the region in control when it is plagued by so many insurgent groups. It may also serve as a training ground for the security forces, to keep them occupied and as a means for their promotions and awards.

Vir Sanghvi, the editor of *Sunday*, puts the blame for the troubles squarely on the shoulders of the Central government. He says:

It seems to me that the problems of the north-east grow because of lack of attention. Contrast the way in which the Punjab militancy was handled with the shoot-them-all approach to the Naga insurgency. Compare the time and effort devoted to the Kashmir problem with the total lack of attention paid to the North-eastern insurgencies.⁵⁸

The author goes on to plead for a better understanding of the Northeast by the rest of the country and says:

Because the North-east is so far removed from our consciousness, we allow things to get worse and worse. Even well-meaning human rights organisation get more agitated about Kashmir than they do about Manipur though both are integral parts of India. It is not a solution but it would help if we started paying more attention to the North-east; if we learn more about it; and if we visited it ourselves. Things may not get better immediately, but there is no doubt that the eventual consequence of the attention would be that they would improve. And more than anything, it would demonstrate to the residents of key states that the rest of us don't regard them as 'Chinks' or potential militants, but as Indians. That alone, would be something.⁵⁹

We feel that what is stated above sums up the problems of the Northeast in general, and that of the Nagas in particular, and indicates the direction for possible solutions to the vexed problems of the region. Hence, the suggestion that

Christianity in the Northeast has bred insurgency is therefore unwarranted and not borne out by facts. In many ways, it has been a force for national integration. The Meiteis, Tripuris and Assamese ULFA hotheads are not Christian, but elements among these communities have turned to militancy and

separatism,... The roots of insurgency whether for autonomy within India or secession from it , lie elsewhere.⁶⁰

It is rather “Delhi’s ‘we know best’ attitude, the superciliousness of its bureaucracy and the overwhelming ignorance of its politicians from the cow-chappati-dust belt to understand the compulsions and beliefs of proud but small nationalities, sees it blundering into one insurgency after another.”⁶¹

4. Towards a Solution to Insurgency

The viability of a complete independence for the Nagas could be debatable but that debate must be done with the participation of the Nagas themselves and not dictated by somebody independently of them. However, the need for more autonomy, the need for the Nagas to govern themselves based on their centuries old traditional ways cannot be questioned. For instance, instead of imposing the Panchayat Raj system, they should evolve their own ways in line with their genius. Perhaps, behind the cry for full independence lies the need to be respected, recognized and treated as equal partners. That is their inalienable right. The Indian Government should not be forgetful of the fact that pre-British India was not a unified country. Even after independence many princely states wanted to remain outside the Indian Union. Some were forced to join the Union. If the Nagas have resisted this forced union, they can hardly be blamed for it especially in the light of the step-motherly treatment they have been given.

Church leaders and missionaries are people who are closer to the people. They are in a better position than the political leaders to gauge the genuine desires, dreams and aspirations of the people. If they were to the leaders of the people, they would have preached the Christian ideology and the weapon of peaceful and non-violent struggle. However, such a leadership was not in their hands, but in the hands of others. And being left to themselves, the insurgent leaders based their struggle on the Marxist ideology and chose armed struggle and violence as their means. In fact, Phizo spoke to his followers in the following words as the beginning of his movement:

We wish to remain within the fold of Christian nations, and of the Commonwealth. If the great Russia and mainland China are proud to feel that they follow the ideology of the German Karl Marx, tiny Nagaland is happy to be a follower of Jesus Christ, who we came to believe as our Saviour.⁶²

5. Ethnic Conflict

Ethnic conflict aims at ethnic cleansing which is the result of tribalism, which in turn produces factional fighting. Hence, these elements are interconnected.

a. Historical Roots of Ethnic Conflict

The challenge of ethnic conflict we are referring to here is the ethnic conflict between the Kukis and the Nagas⁶³ which began in the middle of 1992 and still carries on.

Scholars see the present ethnic conflict between the Nagas and the Kukis as a British legacy. According to K. C. Chaudhuri, the writings of Mackenzie show that the British officials frequently made proposals "to utilize the Kukis as buffer between 'our more timid subjects' and the Angamis."⁶⁴ It may be true that the British, following their typical policy of divide and rule, made use of the Kukis to fight their war against the Nagas in what is now Nagaland and parts of Manipur inhabited by the Nagas. It was also true of the clashes between the Tangkhuls and the Kukis in the Chassad area of Manipur in what is today the Ukhrul district of Manipur.⁶⁵ The historical roots of the clash may help us to understand the present conflict a little better; but they are not the excuse for it. The Nagas and the Kukis were living in quiet peaceful co-existence for decades after they were brought to clash against each other by the British. What is important is to look for the more immediate reasons of the present crisis.

b. Sociological Roots: Tribalism

Closely connected with ethnic conflict/ethnic cleansing is the philosophy of tribalism which can be described as an attitude

of exclusive loyalty to one's tribe, making this to be the criterion of one's aims and actions in life. It is also based on the assumption that one ethnic group can thrive only in its homogenous existence. This would make one support one's own tribe even when it is in the wrong. In the ongoing ethnic clash described above, those adhering to tribalism would not condemn the atrocities committed by their own tribe.

Tribal or clan loyalty among the tribals is one of the very positive values. It makes the tribe or clan united and strong, and care for each other in times of need. This positive aspect needs to be kept alive and fostered among the tribes in the Northeast. However, the negative aspect of excluding others from one's purview for the sake of one's tribe is something which must be rooted out. It does not really serve the good of one's tribe or clan.

Tribal or clan loyalty is stronger than any other loyalty, and is based on the idea that the bond of blood is thicker than that of any other including the bond of baptism of the Christians. But the bond of baptism symbolized by water is really the bond in Christ. Hence, for Christians there can be no stronger bond than this. That is the reason St. Paul was able to affirm: "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3: 27-28). Paul is not negating the distinction of races nor of sexes as such, but is affirming that our unity and oneness in Christ makes any other bond secondary. The unity in the Son of God makes other bonds pale. The bond in Christ Jesus makes Christians closer to each other than any tribe or clan relationship can.

c. Reasons for the Present Conflict

According to Kuldip Nayar, "the ethnic strife between the Nagas and the Kukis has been purposely fanned by the authorities... The Government has used the opportunity to induct more forces and sustain such Draconian laws as the Armed Forces Special Powers and Disturbed Areas Acts. But there is hardly any concili-

ation move.”⁶⁶ A study prepared by the 1993 batch of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officials titled: “Understanding Ethnic Unrest in Indian Peripheris-1994” which was released on 2 May, 1995, “asserts that political parties are responsible for fuelling ethnic unrest in the Northeast.”⁶⁷ These allegations are concordant with a close analysis of the conflict. First of all, the ethnic unrest started at the moment when the various tribals of Manipur were united most. The All Tribal Students Union of Manipur (ATSUM) had convened a meeting in which they adopted a resolution to field a united candidate for the outer Manipur parliamentary constituency and also decided to demand the implementation of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution regarding Autonomous District Councils in the hill areas of Manipur. It was at this moment that the ethnic clash between the Kukis and the Nagas erupted.

Another reason for thinking that the ethnic clash seems to be purposely fanned by a third hand is its protractive nature. Numerous peace efforts have been made by the Churches as well as by various political and public leaders; but peace and reconciliation remain elusive. After the initial spurt of violence, there used to be long periods of lull, then it would erupt in a manner that would be highly provocative by targeting innocent women and children, and that too in the most brutal manner. It would seem as if somebody wanted the conflict to stay alive. Besides, the encounter between the real militants on both sides of the divide was rare. Other ethnic clashes like the one between the Meiteis (the majority Hindu population of Manipur) and the Pangals (the minority Muslim community), was sudden and intense; but peace was restored soon. But the ethnic clash between the Kukis and Nagas is still far from over. However, the vast majority on both sides do not subscribe to this. Thus, the possibility of a third party fanning the clashes is a real possibility.

Outside observers give other reasons too. For instance, one possible reason is the fight over the control of the border town, Moreh, which is an opening to a lucrative trade route to Myanmar, Thailand and the rest of the South East Asian countries. It is also

the main route through which supply of arms and drugs come into Manipur. This could also be the reason, but may be one of the many factors.

Another reason could be the fight for land. In a number of places, the Kukis and Nagas were living side by side. Now the conflict has brought about clear demarcations of land occupied by the two sides. The Kukis have been expelled from places where the Nagas are the majority and vice-versa.

Our own view is that there may be many factors contributive to the conflict, but the main reason behind this conflict is that some people have vested interest in seeing the two major tribal groups of Manipur in constant conflict. These individuals or group of people have subtly exploited the potentially explosive situations and historical events between the Kukis and the Nagas. Hence, both the Kukis and the Nagas are in a way helpless victims of this sinister design. From what has been said above, we tend to agree with the allegations made above. The Government often easily puts the blame for all the troubles in the Northeast on agents of some of our neighbouring countries like the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan. One wonders, at times, whether our own country's agents are not the real culprits.

The Nagas and the Kukis need to have a hard look at the ground realities. First of all, they should not allow themselves to be the victims of exploitation and manipulation by others. Secondly, they must realize the futility of this conflict. Nobody profits from this. It is an exercise in self-destruction. Thirdly, nobody is going to do an act of charity to them. They themselves have to come forward to end the strife, heal the wounds and rebuild their societies in healthy competition.

The world today is becoming a global village with the arrival of super highway electronic communication facilities. When nations are trying to come closer to each other, to think of isolated geographical pockets for individual tribes or races is a going back to a world view of a distant past. The interest and growth as human beings of a tribe or race is best served when this tribe or race can

mix and mingle with others, each contributing and enhancing the growth of the other and itself too.

As long as human beings live in societies, there will always be conflicts and disagreements. These are to be solved by the process of dialogue. If the Nagas and Kukis have been able to sort out their differences through dialogue in the past, why is it not possible now? In this fast changing scenario where the whole world is becoming a village, the challenge seems to be “to transcend these divisions and prove ourselves worthy of a great human heritage.”⁶⁸

6. The Challenge of Factional Fighting

The Naga National Council (NNC), came into existence on 2 February, 1946, as the sole Naga political organization. It was instituted by representatives of individual tribal councils. It resolved: “We shall confront India with an unbreakable wall of Naga solidarity, fired by the spirit of Naga nationalism and armed with a most powerful weapon called truth.”⁶⁹ This initial position is no more the case today. Over the disagreement on the Shillong Accord of 1975, a section of the NNC under Isak Chishi Swu and T, Muivah Tangkhul vowed to struggle on for a sovereign socialist Nagaland under the new banner of National Socialists Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in 1980. A section of Nagas of Myanmar under the leadership of S. S. Khaplang also joined the NSCN. In 1986, a power struggle took place within the NSCN and it was split into two: NSCN (I-M), under Isak and Muivah and NSCN(K) of Khaplang’s leadership. The NNC also split into two in 1990: NNC(A), under the leadership of Adino, the daughter of Phizo, and NNC(K), headed by Khadao Yanthan. “Ideology, ego and tribal barriers separate the groups.”⁷⁰

Though there is a cease-fire⁷¹ between the Government security forces and the Naga rebels, there has not been much let up in the fighting among the different factions. As mentioned earlier, it has reached a situation of almost a civil war.

Unless the different Naga rebel factions can patch up their differences for the greater cause of Naga unity and solidarity, they

will also be the victims of vested interests. They will also lose credibility among their fellow Nagas. Each Naga must ask himself/herself the question posed by Kaka D. Iralu: "Is our goal for the 21st century, self destruction so that others can occupy and claim our God without the nuisance of the native inhabitants? Is our aim one of annihilating ourselves by killing one another so that our land can be taken by others?"⁷² He goes on to say that "Nagas of whatever political ideology have no right to kill another fellow Naga on political and ideological grounds... They cannot be eliminated as nonentities simply because they do not belong to a certain ideological group."⁷³ He, then, poses soul searching questions to the Nagas. "Under what influence and authority have we become such monstrous killers? Is it under the influence of our cultural heritage? Is it the influence of Christianity?"⁷⁴ and says that these new murderous instincts were never a part of Naga culture, in spite of being head-hunters in the past.⁷⁵ On the contrary, he points out how the Nagas "had the greatest respect for the life of a fellow human being. Not to talk of homicidal murder, even accidental killing of a fellow carried the penalty of seven years' exile from one's native village. The reverence for life extended even to the animal world..."⁷⁶ It cannot be under the influence of Christianity because "the essence of Jesus' teaching is to love one another as God has loved us."⁷⁷ Therefore, it is blasphemous to display slogans like "Nagaland for Christ" in political flags and print it on manifestos. If we, however, want to claim him as Lord, as we must, then let us not blaspheme his name by killing one another senselessly."⁷⁸ Lastly, the author poses the question: "is it under a new political ideology? If the answer is yes, then Nagas must forsake it immediately. For any ideology that places itself above human lives and human values spells doom for any one who embraces it. To embrace it is to embrace one's own death."⁷⁹ The author next speaks about putting the Naga house in order first. He says:

With outstretched arms we have been running from every pillar to post crying out at the many violations of human rights against our people by others-and quite justifiably so, for their crimes are many- but let us stop for a second and look at those outstretched hands of ours. What do we see? Aren't they

bloody with the human right violations of a much uglier kind? Only when those hands are clean will we have the real moral authority to point it against others. Even though all of us are not perpetrators of this terrible evil, I think all of us are guilty in some measure by our fear, our indifference and our silence.⁸⁰

The brave voices like the one above give us a silver lining in the apparently gloomy horizon of the Naga society as we enter the new millennium. We need more of such voices. A society has to be shaped by the common wisdom of all, the young and the old, not by just a few. It is the responsibility of every Naga to think, reflect and speak out for the future well-being of its society.

Christianity, especially Baptist Christianity, has a dominant presence among the Nagas of Nagaland as well as those of Manipur. It has to take up the challenge of this fragmentation, first, because it is counter-productive of the Naga national cause, and secondly because it is a scandal of Naga Christianity. The Baptist Church may take the lead but every other Church must play its role. The Catholic Church, though a late comer on the Naga scene is increasing its presence and influence through its various institutions and through these, has a large number of Naga youth in their hands. In fact, according to the Directory of the Diocese of Kohima,⁸¹ over 36,000 Naga youth are under their care. These youth can be shaped to be good Naga leaders of the future.

7. The Challenge of Tradition vs Modernity

a. Loss of Tradition

The present Naga society is at the crossroads “caught between a tradition and modernity, from a society that lived in isolation amid unique tribal set-ups in deep mountainous rain forests of the Naga Hills, they have been transported into a world with satellite television in their drawing rooms.”⁸² It is a world which, on the one hand, is still in the pre-industrial or primitive agricultural age, but on the other hand, enjoying the benefits of the latest of information super highway. It is “basically a traditional

society but the wave of modernization is so strong that we try to ape the West without having the resources. This leads to selling our assets, mainly land, and in the process our very identity is at stake.”⁸³ The younger generation of the Nagas are the worst affected in this. The craze for the latest, without their feet on the firm soil of tradition, has made them lose their sense of identity. They are neither the traditional Nagas nor can they really be their Western counterparts, even though they may dress like them and sing their songs as well as they can. As a result there is a void in the lives of many a Naga youth. This void, this emptiness, is rapidly being filled with the use and abuse of drugs, alcohol and other social evils. There are no social institutions like the *morung* where the youth are trained in the traditions and culture of the tribe. Many parents and elders cannot any more function as sobering influences on the youth as the youth today are much more educated and informed than their parents and the elders.

The way forward cannot consist in going back totally to traditional lifestyle or ways of doing things. In this global village, the Nagas cannot remain isolated. However, Christianity which had in a way brought about modernization through its introduction of Western and modern education, can bring about another change in the Naga society. The Church had lifted the Nagas from their isolation and made them a part of the larger family of Christianity and the human race. In the process, they seem to have almost uprooted the Nagas. The task ahead is to make the Nagas more firmly rooted in their own culture and traditions before transporting them to other cultures and traditions, or while giving them Western, modern education, the Naga youth should simultaneously be taught to know, learn and appreciate their own culture, traditions and values. Even today, education in the West is planned in such a way that till the higher school level students are taught elements of their culture, art, music and the like.

b. Materialism/Consumerism

Close on the heels of modernization is the materialistic and consumeristic outlook in life. The traditional Naga society was

one in which there was an equilibrium between the material needs of the people and their spiritual yearnings. Nagas today, on the whole, are leaning more towards the material side of life. To possess more money and wealth is becoming their main concern and occupation. As a result there is a widening gap between the rich and the poor. In the traditional society, the basic value was that of sharing and caring for each other. Hence, there were not too many rich people nor were there very poor people. It was an egalitarian society. Even the few rich people that were there made a point to share their wealth by celebrating feasts like the Feast of Merit as already pointed out earlier. Today, the value underlying the behaviour of many Nagas seems to be greed, namely, amassing more and more wealth, at times even at the expense of others or by dishonest means. Hence, there is the growth of a chasm between the rich and the poor.

This materialistic outlook in life has affected every aspect of life, even Christian life. Church attendance on Sundays at times looks like fashion parades; the Church compounds look like exhibition grounds meant to show off the owners the latest models of vehicles. In fact, the building of Churches also become competitions to show which community is richer to put up better, more expensive Church buildings. Even the annual gatherings of Christians in conventions and congresses for purposes of spiritual renewal are sometimes measured not in the spiritual quality of the gathering but in material magnitude and richness.

The craze for the latest of everything is another feature seen in the Naga society today, especially among the youth. This is perhaps due to the sudden invasion and availability of consumer goods in the past few years. For instance, in many cultures, even in many other parts of India, the advent of modern development began gradually. It was from bullock carts to cycles, to other two wheelers, four wheelers, and then to the latest models. Or it began with large radios, then to transistors; from black and white to colour television sets, videocassette recorders and the latest of these. But among the Nagas, these consumer goods started with the latest, and the urge to acquire these, though costly, are too tempting to

resist. Hence, money and its acquisition by any means has become a great craze, thus compromising many traditional values of honesty and integrity. Lima Jamir, a doctoral student in economics, sums up the consumeristic attitude of the Nagas aptly. He says: “our society, enveloped by consumerism, is on a take-off stage, but 95 percent of what is earned is spent with little or no savings.”⁸⁴

8. The Challenge of Corruption in Society and Leadership

According to a Nagaland State Government minister, “the only distinction the Nagaland State has earned today is that of corruption...”⁸⁵ Addressing a student gathering, he said that no one is clean in this. He urged the people “not just to pull up the politicians on charges of corruption but also book a few church leaders as well as students too...”⁸⁶ Commenting on the corrupting ways of politicians, L. Aier has this to say: “Winning elections through money powers, at gun point or false promise, the lucre of money has corrupted them all. But it does not stop there. They corrupt the system, the people and the culture.”⁸⁷ On the misuse of Government money which results in the lack of development in the state, V. Sanyu rightly points out: “The politicians and officials who were responsible for handling this money became corrupted as they succumbed to the temptation of quick wealth... Thus, corruption became, in a sense, a way of life as there was no accountability for these funds.”⁸⁸

What could be the reason for so much corruption in the Naga society and leadership? In our description of the traditional Naga society, we had indicated that values like honesty and integrity of life were the ones highly valued. Events in recent years have indicated that “corruption has truly become the hallmark of the Indian psyche - the integral weakness of our moral character.”⁸⁹ The Nagas have not integrated themselves in many aspects of the mainstream of Indian life. However, it seems to be well integrated as far as corruption is concerned. In fact, it can be said that the Nagas have excelled the rest of India in this as Patricia Mukhim says, “amazingly, though we tribals claim to be backward

in many disciplines, we have certainly gained notoriety in this field.”⁹⁰

It is true that corruption in the Naga society is more evident among the leaders. But they are not to be blamed alone. A society gets a leadership it deserves. If every member of the society is vigilant, practises honesty and integrity, the leaders alone cannot be corrupt. Hence, it is the duty and obligation of everyone to fight against the menace of corruption.

9. The Challenge of Underdevelopment

By underdevelopment we mean mainly economic underdevelopment. In our evaluation of the impact of Christianity on specific areas of Naga society, the economic impact was found to be the weakest. According to a recent report of the Department of Food and Civil Supply of the State, 39.92 percent of people in Nagaland are living below the poverty line.⁹¹ The same report states that “there are 96, 000 households in the state below poverty line. This identification was carried out by the State Government’s District Rural Development Agencies (DRDA).”⁹² The report further asserts that Nagaland receives 770 metric tons of rice and 190 metric tons of wheat per month from the centre.⁹³ The youth respondents to our questionnaire too speak about ‘eradication of poverty,’ uplift of the poor and the needy and ‘doing away with the gap between the rich and the poor.’ In order to achieve this, ‘acquisition of new skills and techniques’ as well as ‘the creation of employment opportunities’ are suggested. Practically everyone would admit that one of the main causes of militancies of various kinds in Nagaland and Manipur is unemployment of the educated youth. Unemployment is rampant mainly because employment, in the eyes of the majority, is equated with white-collar jobs in the Government offices.

The challenge facing the Churches in Nagaland is to work for the over all development of the people: spiritual, intellectual and economic. We cannot overstress the one at the expense of the other. The people, on their part, have to recapture their traditional

habit of honest hard work. Speaking on the work ethic among the Nagas, L. Aier has this to say: "To cut it short, all the above is reflective of the absence of work ethic for survival and prosperity through production. In fact, it is a concretization of the syndrome of preference for sole consumption."⁹⁴ According to Takatemjen,

in spite of the huge grants that have been made by the central government for Nagaland, the state of economy remains poor and the process of development is slow. After 35 years of statehood we do not have a good road in Nagaland! The economic programmes of the state have not reached down to the grassroot levels. It is to be noted that the real Nagaland or the North-East is not the towns and the cities where most of the rich people live, but the real Nagaland is in the villages where people are waiting to be uplifted, educated, developed and liberated from their downtrodden conditions.⁹⁵

10. The Challenges Facing Christian Life

a. Shallow Christianity

In spite of the 125 years of Christianity among the Nagas, there is a general feeling that the quality of Christian life is wanting. The present state of Christianity is described in terms of being only nominal, external and having no depth. This was the picture emerging from the people whom we have interviewed and those who had responded to our questionnaire. Some of them went to the extent of saying that 99 per cent of Naga Christians are only nominal. Hence, the greatest challenge for the next millennium is how to make Naga society genuinely Christian.

b. Dichotomy between Faith and Life

One of the first signs of shallow Christianity is the gap between what is believed and what is really practised in actual life. N. Benjei Konyak sums up this dichotomy: "All Nagas use the word Christian in their bio-data - thereby advocating that all Nagas are Christians and also promoting the logo 'Nagaland for Christ.' Deeds should follow words, but in our case, a true

Christian individual both in words and deeds has become rare amongst the Nagas."⁹⁶

c. Lack of Personal Dimension of Christianity

Among all the tribals, the Nagas included, there is a strong sense of the community dimension of faith. Christian life is lived in a communitarian way. This aspect is no doubt to be strengthened. However, the personal dimension of the faith needs to be cultivated too. A personal knowledge and acceptance of Christ as one's Saviour and Lord was something stressed by the youth who responded to our questionnaire. At present, social, tribal or clan pressures can sometimes make Naga Christians compromise truth and Christian values. Though many know that ethnic conflict is unchristian, tribal loyalty sometimes takes precedence.

d. Lack of Faith Formation

For most Naga Christians, proper faith formation at the various stages of their life is lacking. Among the Baptists, there is the practice of Sunday schools for children in which the children are taught Bible stories. They are also made to commit to memory some passages of the Bible. However, there is no systematic way of teaching the values of the Bible or Christianity as they grow up. Often the Christianity they know is that of the fundamentalistic interpretation of the Bible. There is hardly anything done to make the educated youth, for example, confront life's problems with Christian or biblical principles. As a result, the educated youth often lose interest in religion or are sceptical about it or altogether ignore it, as if to say that it is only for children and the uneducated.

The picture is very much the same for the Naga Catholics. Catechesis occupies the least important part of the schedule and the least time is allotted for it. Hence, many Catholics are ignorant about the doctrines of the Church. It is the duty of priests and religious to teach religion to the people because they are supposed to be experts in this field. Unfortunately, sufficient time does not seem to be given for this important ministry. Hence, Catholic

missionaries among the Nagas have to take faith formation more seriously,

e. Naga Christianity: A Western Christianity

Both the dominant Churches among the Nagas, the Baptists and the Catholics, are still very much Western in their theology, liturgy and worship.

The Baptist Church can be said to be indigenised in its structural organization, leadership and personnel but it is far from being indigenised in other aspects. Even in its leadership, it is indigenised in so far as they are all Nagas but most of them are trained in the Western tradition. However, there is a real awakening to make Christianity contextual among many Baptist leaders though they themselves had a Western training.⁹⁷ But, the grass-roots level Baptist Christianity remains very much Western. It still sings Western hymns for worship, its interpretation of the Bible is in the typical Western evangelical and fundamentalistic mould. Its theology too is still very much influenced by Western theology.

The Catholic Church is very much Western, in fact, Roman in its structural organization. It has not yet been indigenised in its personnel. It is still very much a dependent Church in almost all aspects. The laity do not have much say regarding most of the things done in the Church.

There has not been any attempt, so far, to develop a contextualized theology. Peripheral attempts have been made to incorporate some of the Naga symbols like shawls in the liturgy. Like the Baptists, the hymns and prayers said are still borrowed ones.

f. Lack of Ecumenism/Inter-religious Dialogue

It may not be an exaggeration to say that one of the serious lacunae in Naga Christianity is the absence of any ecumenical movement worth the name. The book published in commemoration of 125 years of Christianity in Nagaland, in its forward looking epilogue, mentions a number of recommendations for the next

millennium like: 'Back to the Bible;' 'Restoration of Truth and Integrity;' 'Caring and Sharing;' 'Seek peace and pursue it,'⁹⁸ and the like, but ecumenism is conspicuously absent. The same is true of the recent publications on Naga Christianity like M. M. Thomas' *The Nagas towards A. D. 2000*,⁹⁹ Rev. V. K. Nuh's *A Theological Reflection on Naga Society*.¹⁰⁰ Another recent book by Takatemjen, *Studies on Theology and Naga Culture*,¹⁰¹ contains a chapter entitled: "Nagas towards 2005: Priorities" but makes no mention of ecumenism. Instead of ecumenism, inter-denomination rivalries occur often and these rivalries, in the words of Father Alex Vizo, an Angami Catholic priest, "often act as countersigns to the values of the kingdom of God like love and peace. Sheep stealing is an accusation that is often made against each other. Hence, there is an attitude of indifference, if not opposition by the churches to ecumenism."¹⁰² What Hokishe Sema said about the ecumenical situation among the Nagas may be a summary of the present state of affairs. According to him: "Various denominations want to expand their own denominations."¹⁰³

But today's Naga youth want a change in this regard. Hence, 17 out of the 60 (20.33 %) respondents of our questionnaire clearly refer to the various aspects of ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue. Their outlook seems to be broader. Respect and dialogue with other cultures and religions are envisaged. Baptists, Catholics and other Christian denominations must stress their great unity and oneness in Christ rather than their minor differences. Hence, ecumenical efforts must be made to bring the various Christian denominations together. Disunity among the different Christian bodies also affects the unity of the Naga society as a whole. If Christian unity and brotherhood cannot be achieved, the task of bringing about Naga brotherhood may be more difficult. It is therefore, incumbent on every Christian leader, every denomination and every individual Christian to foster an ecumenical atmosphere among the Nagas.

g. Lack of Inculturation/Contextual Theologising

We have already referred to the feeling in the minds of many Nagas that 'the Baptist Church is too American, and the Catholic

Church too Roman.’ This feeling indicates a longing for making the Churches their own, truly Naga and Christian.

Attempts at contextualizing theology are being made especially by the Protestant theologians among the Nagas in the Northeast like, R. Keitzar,¹⁰⁴ V. K. Nuh,¹⁰⁵ Takatemjen,¹⁰⁶ C. Jajo¹⁰⁷ and O. Alem.¹⁰⁸ Though these authors cover the whole Northeast, they are Nagas and their reflections are particularly pertinent to the Naga situation. However, these attempts seem to be confined to the theoretical or theological levels alone. Contextualization in real life and worship is not so evident.

The Naga Catholic Church lags far behind her counterparts in the field of contextual theologising. Some attempts have been made by students of theology at the graduate level; but so far, no serious contextual theologising has been attempted and published. Nevertheless, the Catholic Church seems to be ahead in inculturating her liturgy and worship¹⁰⁹ though more needs to be done in this regard.

CONCLUSION

“Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Prov. 29: 18). The glimmer of hope behind the brutally honest and critical evaluation of chapter three, now shines brightly in the dreams of chapter four. Dreams indicate what can be. They indicate the height and depth that can be attained by Naga Christianity. This dream or vision is not something “ready made for realization, but a process, continuously renewed through deeper Christian life, greater collaboration, enriched and inculturated Church,”¹¹⁰ says J. Puthenpurakal. Some of these may never be fully realized or attained but they will serve as spurs for the Nagas to know the ‘true Christianity’ (an expression often used by the youth) and live it.

As in real life, when one awakes from dreams to the harsh realities, the dreams of Naga youth too are confronted with the harsh realities of Naga life and society today which is plagued by factionalism, corruption and other challenges which we have mentioned. The Nagas have never shrunk from their responsi-

lities in the past and they cannot do so now. With their traditional resilience, they must turn these challenging situations into golden opportunities to build their future. The step ahead lies in the combination of the best in Naga tradition and culture with the core message of Jesus Christ, fully human and fully divine, whom they have embraced as their Lord and Master. We shall deal with this way ahead for the Nagas in the next chapter.

The above mentioned dreams and challenges are the leading ones mentioned by the youth responding to our questionnaire. Our personal experience too confirms these as the important dreams and challenges facing the Naga society and Christianity today. There are also other challenges like drug and alcoholic addiction, unemployment, and similar ones. The challenges we have enumerated confront the Nagas on two main fronts: on the level of society and on the level of Christian life. We shall attempt to turn these challenges into opportunities for a better Naga society and a more authentic Naga Christianity. This will be an effort to realize the dreams of a new Naga society and Christianity. This process will be nothing but recapturing the best values in the traditional society, enriching it with the genuine Christic experience of the Nagas.

ENDNOTES

1. Cf. NPN, "NSF's Call for Unity," *Nagaland Post*, 14 January, 1997, p. 1
2. *Nagaland Post*, Editorial, 28 February, 1997, p. 6.
3. "Unity a must: Jamir," *Nagaland Post*, 11 March, 1997, p. 1.
4. K. Mulatonu, "Let Peace live," *Nagaland Post*, 30 July, 1997, p. 6.
5. *Ibid.*
6. M. Amin Kom, "Give Peace a Chance," *North East Sun*, 15-31 May, 1997, p. 27.
7. R. Semp, V. Lhousa, "Nagas: One People," *Nagaland Post*, 13 September, 1997, p. 6.
8. B. Irom, "Shun Violence and work for Peace," *The North East Age*, 29 November, 1997, p. 9.
9. "NSF urge Reconciliation," *Nagaland Post*, 15 January, 1997, p. 1.
10. "APO assures Support for Peace Talk," *Nagaland Post*, 13 March, 1997, p. 2.
11. *Ibid.*

12. Correspondent, "Naga Hoho calls for Unity," *The Telegraph*, 16 July, 1998, p. 6.
13. Cf. PTI, "Naga Hoho demands Extension of Ceasefire," *The Shillong Times*, 11 July, 1998, p. 1.
14. Dietho-o, "Wishing for a New Nagaland to be born," *Nagaland Post*, 29 April, 1998, p. 5.
15. Ibid,
16. Ibid., 30 April, 1998, p. 5.
17. Cf. M. Horam, *Social Life*, op. cit., p. 106.
18. Cf. ibid., p. 107.
19. V. Sanyu, "What Nagaland State did to the Nagas: A Historical Perspective," in S. M. Channa, ed., *Nagaland : A Contemporary Ethnography*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1992, p. 265.
20. M. Aram, "The Emerging Situation in Nagaland and Some Suggestions for a National Policy," in K. S. Singh, ed., *Tribal Situation in India*, op. cit., p. 125.
21. P. Barathakur, "The Troubled Nagaland: Search for Peace," *The Shillong Times*, 25 November, 1995, p. 4.
22. O. Sunil, "Need of the Hour is Peace," *North East Telegraph*, 1 September, 1997, p. 1.
23. A. Kumar Nag, "Heralding Peace in Nagaland," *The Meghalaya Guardian*, 6 August, 1997, p. 4.
24. A Correspondent report, "Do the Bells finally toll for Peace"? *Northeast Telegraph*, 15 December, 1997, p. 1.
25. A. Kumar Nag, "Heralding Peace," art. cit., p.1.
26. B. G. Verghese, *India's Northeast*, op. cit., p. 83.
27. Cf. A. Kumar Nag, "Heralding Peace," art. cit., p. 4.
28. A. Z. Phizo, an Angami Naga, was the founder father of Naga insurgency.
29. Cf. P. Pareek, "Nagaland: Give Peace no Chance; A Solution to the Naga Problem remains Elusive," *Sunday*, 31 August-6 September, 1997, p. 61.
30. Ibid.
31. "Do the Bells finally toll for Peace"? art. cit., p. 1.
32. Cf. ibid., p. 1.
33. Cf. T. Menampampil, *Peace: An Urgent Need today*, Archbishop's House, Guwahati, 1997.
34. Cf. T. Menampampil, *Becoming Peacemakers: The Greatest Challenge Today*, Archbishop's House, Guwahati, 1997.
35. B. K. Roy Burman, "Insurgency: its Dynamics and Vision for NE India," *The Meghalaya Guardian*, 21 September, 1996, p. 4
36. Ibid.
37. K. Maitra, *The Nagas Rebel and Insurgency in the North East*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1998, p. 16.
38. Ibid., p. 19.
39. Ibid., p. 21.
40. Ibid.

41. Ibid., p. 22.
42. V. Ghosal, "Roots of Militancy in N. E.," *The Shillong Times*, 15 January, 1998, p. 4.
43. There might have been instances when the missionaries required the new converts to give up certain cultural practices which were deemed unchristian in the light of the missiology of that time. But many missionaries made amends and have become champions of preserving the cultural heritage of the people. Another thing to be noted is that cultural anthropologists of that time were merely concerned with the preservation of culture and customs without any regard to whether these were compatible to the Gospel values or not. Some of the present day anthropologists also think that tribals even today should be kept as museum pieces for them to do research and acquire Ph.D degrees without giving a thought that culture is a dynamic thing that changes, adapts and modifies according to the changing times.
44. Cf. K. Maitra, *The Nagas Rebel*, op. cit., p. 85.
45. K. Nayar, "Between the Lines: Defiance by the Nagas," *The Sentinel*, 8 March, 1995, p. 4.; Kuldip Nayar, a renowned journalist, is a former High Commissioner of India to Britain, and is now a sitting member of the Rajya Sabha.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Patricia Mukhim, "The Nagaland Lottery Swindle," art. cit., p. 4.
49. K. Nayar, "Between the Lines," art. cit., p. 4.
50. It is reported that the NSCN chief Muivah feels that the Government is backtracking on some of the agreed conditions "Centre's Stand irks Muivah," *The Telegraph*, 17 July, 1998, p.8)
51. Cf. K. Nayar, "Between the Lines," art. cit., p. 4.
52. "VHP cautions US to stay away from NE Issues," *The Shillong Times*, 18 November, 1997, p. 3.
53. A. Shourie, *Missionaries in India: Continuities, Changes*, op. cit., pp. 205-206. See also reviews of the book by Khuswant Singh, "Eating Missionaries," *The Week*, 12 June, 1994, pp. 20-21; and Mani Shankar Aiyar, "Mission of Hate," *Frontline*, 17 June, 1994, pp. 16-17.
54. B. G. Verghese, *India's Northeast*, op. cit., p. 284.
55. Ibid.
56. Cf. K. Maitra, *The Nagas Rebel*, art. cit., p. 80.
57. Ibid., p. 82.
58. V. Sanghvi, "Can the Twain meet?," *Sunday*, 7-13 April, 1996, p. 9.
59. Ibid.
60. B. G. Verghese, *India's Northeast*, op. cit., pp. 284-285.
61. S. Hazarika, *Strangers of the Mist: Tales of War and Peace from India's Northeast*, Penguin Books India, Revised Edition, New Delhi, 1995, p. 249.
62. K. Maitra, *The Nagas Rebel*, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

63. It should be noted that the clash is between one faction of the Naga underground, namely, the NSCN(I-M) and not with NSCN(K) and one tribe out of the larger Kuki-Chin-Mizo tribe, i.e. the Thadou speaking Kuki tribe.
64. K. C. Chaudhuri, "Ethnic Clashes: The Genesis of the Naga-Kuki Feud," *The Statesman*, 23 November, 1994, p. 6. The article contains a number of examples of how the British used the Kukis to fight the Nagas for them (the British).
65. Ibid.
66. K. Nayar, "Between the Lines," art. cit., p. 4.
67. S. Hazarika, "Insurgency in Northeast India," *Eastern Panorama*, September, 1995, p. 20.
68. Patricia Mukhim, "The Ethnic Paranoia," *The Shillong Times*, 25 October, 1996, p. 4.
69. K. Maitra, *The Nagas Rebel*, op. cit., p. 144.
70. B. G. Verghese, *India's Northeast*, op. cit., p. 101.
71. This ceasefire started on 1 August 1997, first for three months; it was extended for another three months, that is, till 31 January, 1998. It has once again been extended for another three months commencing on 1 February, 1998 (From August 1, 1998, the ceasefire has been extended for one year).
72. K. D. Iralu, "Wither the Nagas in the 21st Century?" *Nagaland Post*, 25 February, 1997, p. 5.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. The reason for the practice of head-hunting was quite different. See chapters one and three on the same.
76. Ibid., p. 5.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid., p.5.
80. Ibid.
81. Cf. *Directory*, Diocese of Kohima, 1995-96, p. 12.
82. "At Crossroads: Nagas in Transition on the Threshold of 21st Century," *The North East Age*, 276 November, 1997, p. 9.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., p. 9.
85. "Nagas must change Lifestyle," art. cit., p. 1.
86. Ibid., p. 1.
87. L. Aier, "The Naga situation: an Analysis," *The Nagaland Post*, 10 March, 1997, p.5.
88. V. Sanyu, *What Nagaland State did*, art. cit., p. 270.
89. Patricia Mukhim, "The Nagaland Lottery," art. cit., p. 4.
90. Ibid.

91. Cf. UNI, "39.92 Percent living below Poverty Line: Report," *The Shillong Times*, 18 July 1998, p. 3.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid.
94. L. Aier, "Christianity and Work Ethic: An Observation on Naga Society," in J. Puthenpurakal, ed., *Impact of Christianity*, op. cit., p. 523.
95. Takatemjen, *Studies on Theology*, op. cit., p.135.
96. N. Benjei Konyak, "Ocean of Naga Tears," *Nagaland Post*, 5 March, 1997, p. 6.
97. A National Seminar on the theme of: "Theologising with Tribal Resources," was organized by Eastern Theological College, Jorhat, a premier Baptist Theologate of the region. Many Naga Baptist theologians participated and presented papers on Naga theology.
98. Cf. A. P. Aier, ed., *From Darkness to Light*, NBCC, Kohima, 1997, pp. 180- 185.
99. Cf. M. M. Thomas, *The Nagas towards A. D. 2000*, Centre for Research on New International Economic Order, Chennai, 1992.
100. Cf. V. K. Nuh, *A Theological Reflection on Naga Society*, Research Wing, CBC, Kohima, 1996.
101. Cf. Takatemjen, *Studies on Theology*.
101. A. Vizo, Interview by author, Chiephobozou, April 24, 1998.
103. H. Sema, Interview by author, Tape recording, Dimapur, August 19, 1997.
104. Cf. R. Keitzar, "Developing a Contextual Theology for North East India," in J. Massey, ed., *Contextual Theological Education*, ISPCK, Delhi, 1993, pp. 28-36. The same author also has edited a book: *Good News for North East India: A Theological Reader*, The Christian Literature Centre, Guwahati, 1995. This volume also contains a number of articles on contextual theology.
105. Cf. V. K. Nuh, *A Theological Reflection on Naga Society*, op. cit.
106. Cf. Takatemjen, *Studies on Theology*, op. cit.
107. Cf. C. Jajo, *Christian Life in a Tribal Context: In Manipur*, op. cit.
108. Cf. O. Alem, *Tsungremology: Ao Naga Christian Theology*, Clark Theological College, Mokokchung, 1994.
109. Cf. A. Alangimattathil, *Church and Culture: A Church in Naga Culture*, Bishop's House, Dimapur, (n.d.).
110. J. Puthenpurakal, Interview by author, Shillong, September 1. 1997.

CHAPTER FIVE

NAGAIZED CHRISTIANITY: A NEW WAY OF BEING NAGA CHRISTIANS

INTRODUCTION

At the threshold of the new millennium, every society, every community, especially every Christian community, is planning and looking ahead with expectations and hopes. The Naga society which is predominantly Christian wants to do the same.¹ The Nagas have just celebrated 125 years of Christianity on their soil.² It was an occasion for a deep introspection as well as for looking forward to a better future for Naga Christianity. In our evaluation, we discovered that Naga Christianity has been found wanting in many areas. However, we have also come to realize, through our interviews, questionnaires and contacts with our fellow Naga Christians, that there is a tremendous sense of hope for a brighter future despite the seemingly insurmountable challenges and obstacles. This hope spurs us on to search and explore new ways of being Naga Christians.

This new way of being Naga Christians is summed up in the expression: *Nagaized Christianity*. If the process of Christianization of the Nagas has been found wanting, one must adopt another approach. Bishop K. Sarpong of Kumasi in Ghana, speaking in a similar situation said, “Christianity should be Africanized, not Africa Christianized.”³ Cardinal Malula, the Archbishop of Kinshasa, expressing the same line of thought, said: “In the past, foreign missionaries Christianized Africa; today Africans are Africanizing Christianity.”⁴ Inspired by the attempts made by the African theologians, P. Haokip, who belongs to the Kuki tribe, speaks of Kukiising Christianity.⁵ Similar things can be said about the Church/Christianity among the Nagas and the

need of the hour for Christianity among the Nagas is the nagaization of Christianity. S. Sempore, in an article on: "The Churches in Africa between Past and Future,"⁶ argues that Christianity which flourished in North Africa at the time of St. Augustine did not survive long but fell with the fall of the Roman Empire because the Church was only latinized and not africanized. Without sounding too pessimistic, there is a danger of Christianity not surviving long among the Nagas if it is not really and firmly rooted in the soil of their culture.

What does *nagaization* of Christianity mean or imply? Bishop Sarpong spelled out the meaning of africanization of Christianity by saying: "A close examination of Christ's message reveals two clear characteristics: faith in God, and love of God and of the neighbour. The cultural envelope in which it appears is irrelevant to the message itself. The western cultural envelope must therefore give way to the African one."⁷ He goes on to argue:

The more universal a thing is, the more expressible it is in various forms. Take humanity, for example. Because humanity is universal, it can be expressed in the Chinese, the African and the Indonesian; so that the Chinese is a human being. But the Chinese is not African nor Indonesian, the African is not Indonesian or Chinese and the Indonesian is not Chinese or African. So Christianity's claim to universality is valid only when it can be expressed in any form.⁸

Cardinal Malula speaks of the africanization of Christianity as a project, the aim of which is "to promote an authentically African local Church."⁹ Applied to the Nagas, nagaization of Christianity would mean a Christianity that is conceived, born, bred and growing from the soil and soul of Naga culture, fulfilling their hopes and aspirations. It would be a Christianity they hold as their very own; that which belongs to them, instead of their belonging to it. If it is to be their own, the fulfilment of their hopes and aspirations, it should begin with the most cherished hopes and dreams of the Nagas and the kind of Christianity that will bring about the realization of such longings. Our reflections in this chapter will be of an exploratory nature.

I. CHRISTIAN LOVE, UNITY AND PEACE

There is no disagreement or quarrel regarding the need for peace, unity and love. All speak about them and all long for them. However, what is not clear is precisely how we understand the true meanings of these terms. As Christians, the peace, unity and love we speak about have to be based on those taught by Christ. Hence, we shall briefly examine the Christian idea of peace, unity and love.

1. The Peace of Christ

The Hebrew word *shalom* stands for peace in the Old Testament. It originally stands for 'the essence of well-being and happiness,' 'total harmony within the community,' 'founded upon order and permeated by God's blessing.' Later, especially in the preaching of the prophets, the idea of peace as absence of war arose and it could only be established on righteousness which, in turn, was described as life ethically ordered in all its aspects. The link between peace and righteousness is seen in biblical passages like Is. 32: 1f; Ps. 72: 3-7; 85: 10, etc. The peace that the Bible speaks about is also a peace in the animal realm both among the animals, and the animals and human beings (cf. Is 11: 6-8; Ez. 34: 25; Hos. 2:18; Is. 65: 25; Jer. 31: 31-34) and peace among nations (cf. Is. 2: 2-4, Mic. 4: 1-4; Zech. 8: 23). It will be a completely free gift of God (cf. Is. 2: 2-4; 32: 17 etc.). God will not give this gift directly but will give the Messiah, 'the prince of peace' (Is. 9: 6) the task of achieving this final happiness (cf. Is. 7: 14; 9: 6f; Dan. 7: 13 etc.). Thus, only Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed of God, can bring about this peace.

The New Testament uses the Greek word *eirene* (peace). In itself it means the opposite of *polemos* (war), the blessing of the *polis* (city, state) which depends on the favourable act and attitude of the gods. It was used as a form of greeting in the Pauline Letters which signifies that peace is the immediate effect of the salvation brought about by the Messiah. It is characteristic of his manifestations (Cf. Lk. 1: 79; 2: 14; Mk. 5: 34, etc.). It is this salvation

which is proclaimed in the 'gospel of peace' (Eph. 6: 15). Jesus gives it to his disciples (cf. Jn. 14: 27; 16: 33). In its content it is parallel to life (cf. Rom. 8: 6; 2 Peter 3: 14). This idea finds its development in 1 Thess. 5: 23 and also in Hebr. 13: 20f. It means that when a man is in the state of *eirene* the whole man is sound, and whole in body and mind alike. The main effect of this is that through Christ, who is our peace personified (cf. Eph. 2: 14), man is in the state of peace with God. According to Eph. 2: 14-18, Christ established peace in two ways: between mankind and God (cf. Rom. 5: 1), and among men by which Christ has brought down the barrier between the Jew and Gentile and now both can enter into the one and the same Spirit through Christ (Eph. 2: 18; Lk. 19: 38).

The peace required among the Nagas is this biblical idea of peace, God's gift through Christ implying total wholeness, wellbeing and happiness, an anticipation of the eschatological times. This kind of peace is not a mere temporary cessation of hostilities but an attitude, a spirituality and a way of life.

2. Unity/Fellowship in Christ

The desire for unity is another dream of the Nagas. We have already pointed out that the desired goal of unity is unity in diversity, unity of universal brotherhood/sisterhood, etc. This unity can be brought about by Christ alone. In fact, besides the nomenclature *Naga*, the most potent source of Naga unity is their fellowship in Christ as Christians. The name *Naga* has failed to unite them so far. Therefore, unity in Christ can be the most powerful and lasting means of bonding, and this is what it should be.

Christian fellowship in the New Testament, predominantly in Paul, is expressed by the word *koinonia* which means "fellowship, partnership and also with participation and sharing."¹⁰ Moreover, "the lexicons indicate that the word group represented by *koinonia* is distinguished from synonyms by the idea of fellowship, of inner relationship," and it "expresses a mutual relationship."¹¹ Paul's understanding of *koinonia* is to be seen in the context of fellowship which arises in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 10: 16ff). Those who

“partake of the Lord’s Supper are Christ’s companion... Thus, the nature of the Lord’s Supper is expounded by Paul in terms of fellowship with the person of Christ, namely, *koinonia* with his body and blood.”¹² This fellowship with Christ “also means that the Christian participates in the detailed phases of the life of Christ,” and this “fellowship with Christ necessarily leads to fellowship with Christians, to the mutual fellowship of members of the community.”¹³ The word *koinonia* is also “a favourite term” in 1 John

to describe the living bond in which the Christian stands. Here, too, the word implies inward fellowship on a religious basis. To be a Christian is to have fellowship with God. This fellowship is with the Father and the Son, 1: 3, 6. It issues in the brotherly fellowship of believers, 1: 3, 7. The believer’s communion with God or Christ consists in mutual abiding (*menein*, 3: 24; 4: 13), which begins in this world and reaches into the world to come, where it finds its supreme fulfilment, 3: 2.¹⁴

The unity desired by the Nagas need to be founded on this mutual fellowship in Christ. As Christians, they have a common fellowship with Christ, the Son of God. If the bonds of human fellowship like that of tribe and clan or friendship, are strong means of unity, how much more should the divine bond in Christ be, as we have already pointed out earlier when citing St. Paul (cf. Gal. 3: 27-28).

3. Meaning of Christian Love

We have already mentioned that love in the traditional Naga society was confined to love of family, of the clan and the tribe. What does Christian love mean? Who are the objects of true Christian love? Is Christian love identical with the love we speak about in the traditional Naga society? If not, what is the love that is normative for Naga Christians? As Christians, we know that the love that Christ taught has to be the norm for our conduct. We also should be clear that Naga culture, like any other culture, may possess many good and correct values, but it needs to be enriched.

supplemented and fulfilled by the values of the Gospel Jesus came to preach. Hence, if some of the cultural values do not measure up to those of the Gospel, they have to be sacrificed for the sake of Jesus' value.

The pages of the New Testament tell us that Jesus came to preach the message of love and his greatest commandment was that of love:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Matt. 22: 37-40; Mk. 12: 28-34; Lk. 10: 25-28).

What does this love mean? The God revealed by Jesus is primarily a God of love, a God who loves human beings: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn 3: 16). In the New Testament, the love of God for human beings is expressed in terms of *agape* or *agapan*,¹⁵ and "this *agape* of God physically confronts us in Christ, the beloved Son of the Father who likewise loves us"¹⁶ (Cf. Mk. 1: 11; 9: 7; Matt. 12: 18). Jesus Christ, in turn, commands us to love one another as he has loved us: "I give you a new commandment that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another"(Jn. 13: 34-35).

Thus, loving one another becomes the signature tune, or the identity card of the followers of Jesus Christ. Love for one another, in turn, is most frequently described as "love of neighbour" which is "seen most closely connected with the love of God, and together with it constitutes the commandment *par excellence*".¹⁷ And who is a neighbour? In the New Testament,

neighbour is not merely a fellow-member of one's tribe or people; the alien too, and even the sinners (2 Cor. 2: 8) are also one's neighbour, as is one's enemy, whether in a personal

or a national sense - in short everyone who by God's providential disposition of things is brought 'near' to me in order that I may serve him, or he me, in love. This is the teaching of Jesus which he himself expounds in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10: 30-37). For as the love of God is extended to all men, so also must ours be (Matt. 5: 44f; Lk. 6: 31-36, etc.).¹⁸

It is quite clear that "in our love we are not to confine ourselves merely to reciprocating the love of those who love us. One profound effect of true *agape* is that it causes us to love our enemies."¹⁹ Moreover, "true *agape* neither defends itself nor takes revenge, but rather endures injustice patiently (Matt. 5: 39ff; Lk. 6: 28ff, etc.) ... The result is that properly speaking, when they bestow *agape* upon each other in this way Christians are no more than giving back the unmerited love of God which they have experienced (Matt. 10: 8; Rom. 15: 7, etc.)."²⁰ To sum it up, the standard with which we have to love our neighbour is the one set by Jesus himself: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you" (Jn. 15: 13).

Christianity can be summed up as a religion of love: love of God and love of neighbour, namely of anyone who is in need of our service and love, including our enemies, to the extent of sacrificing our lives. This core truth of Christianity must be understood and preached in order to bring about true and authentic Christianity among the Nagas. We might ask ourselves: how often do we hear sermons on love and forgiveness of neighbours/enemies preached in our pulpits? We have also pointed out the external signs of Christianity being displayed on our highways, byways and in our streets in the form of captions like 'Jesus saves,' 'Jesus never fails,' 'Prepare to meet your Maker,' etc. These captions betray a Christianity that is more self-oriented, and otherworldly. Perhaps, captions like 'Forgive your enemies,' 'Love your enemy,' 'Love one another as I have loved you,' etc., should be displayed more and preached about. Genuine Christianity can come about only when the fundamentals of Christ's teaching are learned,

understood and practised however difficult they might be. If one picks and chooses what is more convenient in Christianity, it will no more be a Christocentric but self-centric Christianity.

4. How to bring about Peace, Unity and Love

a. Education for Peace, Unity and Love

Northeast India as a whole, and Nagaland and Manipur in particular, are experiencing what might be called a 'gun culture,' a culture of violence. The most popular toy for the children are toy guns. Even these children know the differences between the various sophisticated guns in the market. Most people can identify the type of gun that is fired from the mere sound. In areas of ethnic conflict, every household feels the need to possess a gun. Therefore, the whole atmosphere is tainted with this culture of violence.

To counteract the above situation, the urgent need of the moment is to foster a climate of peace and harmony. Since the culture of violence has been raging for quite some time, a long-term plan is to be sought for. One such plan could be to introduce school texts that speak about the beauty of peaceful co-existence of different peoples and races. It could also be personalities that have symbolized peace and harmony in their lives. In this way, the young minds can build up in themselves a culture of peace and become peace makers.

The necessary consequence of this spurt of violence is the atmosphere of hatred and intolerance. This polluted atmosphere of hatred can be purified only by promoting love and educating the people to love.

b. Agents of Peace, Unity and Love?

i. The Intelligentsia

The intelligentsia of the Naga society have a special responsibility of being speakers and makers of peace. The destiny

of a society or a nation is shaped and moulded by the intelligentsia. If every Naga has to contribute his/her mite, the responsibility of the intellectuals is much more, as L. Aier rightly points out: "Intellectuals cannot afford to be silent anymore. They have to raise their voices loud and clear so that a new environment is created where the dust of confusion and anarchy is allowed to settle down giving way to the noble perspective of Nagaism."²¹

There are other brave voices like that of Kaka D. Iralu who, speaking on "Wither the Nagas in the 21st Century" says:

What are our political, economic and intellectual goals. I am inclined to ask. Do we have any goals at all? Our people seem to be drunk with our own blood and have no vision or goal except to get more drunk with more blood. God forbid that we continue in this drunken stupor. We must awaken and we must rise up and walk in the paths of peace and love for one another.²²

Another prophetic voice is that of Niketu Iralu who says: "Nagas in the depths of their hearts long for nothing more strongly than transparency and truthfulness in our dealings with one another. If we can achieve this unitedly, all else will be added to our struggle. Why not start by declaring a moratorium on hate and vision of truth..."²³ Others like T. Khiamniungan dare to criticise the NSNC(I-M) supremo Muivah and say: "it is time for the young leaders of NSCN to realise the wrong policy of Muivah and abandon the NSCN in the interest of peace and national unity of Nagaland..."²⁴

Voices like those above need to increase and spread. They need to speak out against the evils of the society. These voices should speak out fearlessly and be even ready to pay the price for what they say. A society that encourages and fosters this kind of self criticism can be said to be on the right track. While these critical voices are needed and should be taken seriously, creative and constructive voices for peace, harmony and love need to be heard more. The intelligentsia must, through their writings and through other media, come up with ways and means of creating a peaceful, loving and harmonious Naga society.

ii. Various Naga Organisations

The various social organizations already existing among the Nagas like the Naga Gaon Bura (G.B.) Federation, the lowest and the largest lobby in Nagaland, representing the grassroots level both in villages and towns, Naga Mothers' Association (NMA), an association of Naga mothers and adult Naga Women; Naga Women's Union (NWU), an association of all Naga women inclusive of young Naga women; Naga Students Federation (NSF), etc., can be agents for mobilising the people in their responsibility to bring about peace, harmony and love in the society as a whole.

iii. Every Naga is Responsible for Peace, Harmony and Love

The three most cherished dreams of the Nagas - peace, unity and love - can be realized if every Naga considers it his/her sacred duty and responsibility to promote these values. The desire for peace, harmony and love does not suffice. Every Naga must decide to be an active agent of peace, love and harmony. It is easy to lament the lack of these values. It is still easier to blame everyone else. Everyone, in fact, is responsible for the present state of affairs and everyone, in one way or another, has contributed to the present mess. If everyone decides to opt for peace, love and unity and work for these, there will be peace, love and harmony. Often, the trouble is that it is left to somebody else to bring about peace. If all decide to have peace, there will not be any factional fighting among the Nagas; if all decide to be agents of love and harmony, there will not be ethnic clashes and if all decide to solve the Naga national issue by peaceful means, there will not be armed struggle and violence. The dreams and aspirations of a whole society should not be left to the decisions of a few only. The society as a whole must share the responsibility. People should be conscientised towards this. The way to do it could be along the lines suggested by Mukhim:

Through (1) direct social mobilisation, (2) more effective use of free speech in public debate and in writing, (3) through

more creativity in society for devising means for such expression through powerful and appealing language and action, (4) responsible social activism of a crusader type rather than of a self-serving acolyte or rabble rouser.²⁵

c. Christians as Members of a Clan

Among the tribal bonds of relationships, the clan relationship is second only to that of the nuclear family. In fact, the clan is the larger family. African theologians have been speaking about “the Church as clan.”²⁶ This is a model which can be applied to the Naga Church in which we can group all Christians as members of the same clan. A clan is one group of families which claim a common ancestor and are usually known by the name of that ancestor. Christians are, indeed, of the same clan having a common ancestor Christ and are named after him. This model of seeing all Christians as members of the same clan is quite biblical:

The promise, ‘I shall be your God and you shall be my people,’ echoes through the Old Testament (Ex. 6: 7; 19: 5, etc.), and continues in the New. The Church is the Israel of God (Gal. 6: 16), the chosen people and a holy nation (1 Pet. 2: 9), the family of God (Eph. 2: 19; 1 Tim. 3: 15). Its members have been ‘born again’ (Jn. 3: 3; 1 Pet. 1: 3; 1 Jn. 1: 3) or ‘adopted’ (Rom. 8: 15, 23; Gal. 4: 5; Eph. 1: 5) into a new family relationship by virtue of which they can call God ‘Father’ (Rom. 8: 14-17). Thus, whether speaking of nation, people or family, the Old and New Testaments present first Israel and then the Church in terms of a kinship group. Such a group is defined by its vertical dimension of communion with God and its horizontal dimension of interpersonal fellowship. Whatever the nature of a given culture’s relationships of belonging, its structures stand in continuity with those of the biblical peoples where they convey the reality of these two dimensions. However, whereas a western model of the Church as ‘community’ focuses only on one dimension, the African clan is able to convey the reality of both.²⁷

This African model is doubly applicable to the Naga situation. First, because it is a tribal model, it suits the Naga

tribal situation, and secondly, it is applicable because it has a biblical base.

Another argument for the clan model of the Church in Africa is from the African sense of identity. In contrast to the Cartesian, 'I think, therefore, I am,' the African maxim is 'I belong by blood relationship, therefore, I am.'²⁸ This maxim too would be perfectly meaningful and true to the Nagas. Clan relationship is distinguished by the bond of blood. The Christian bond by the blood of Christ should have no rival at all.

The idea of Christian *koinonia* we have described above can also be used to depict tribal fellowship by clan. Hence, summing up the ideas of Christian fellowship, love and peaceful co-existence in terms of belonging to one and the same clan is not only nagaizing Christian identity but also a powerful means of bringing about peace, harmony and love among the diverse Naga tribes.

Where there is love, peace and unity, there is Christ and where there is Naga unity, love and peace, there will be a Naga Christ. Naga Christianity not only needs to nagaize the values of Christ but also Christ himself. We shall indicate the lines along which such a nagaization of Christ could be attempted.

II. NAGA CHRISTOLOGY

In their responses to our questionnaire, the Naga youth often wrote about being true Christians. Negatively, a true Christian is not one who is only nominal, who has no Christian faith, who is too materialistic, whose Christianity is only an external show, a fashion, who does not love his/her neighbour, one who does not practise what he/she preaches, etc. Positively, a true Christian is one who has a personal knowledge and acceptance of Christ. This personal knowledge and acceptance of Christ will come about only when Christ is considered as a Naga, understood in terms of Naga epithets, given Naga titles and looks like a Naga. When the editor of a leading Gujarati weekly, *Jan Kalyan*, a Hindu-owned publication, was asked why he was publishing pictures of Jesus

and articles on Him, his reply was: "And why not? After all Christ was one of the noblest sons this earth has ever produced." He further said: "Hindus and that, too, from Gujarat are considered basically simple-minded people. If Christ is presented to them in a manner befitting their life culture, many would follow Him."²⁹

1. Naga Christ

Hans Küng in his book *Christianity* says that "if we ask quite basically why Christianity is Christianity, the answer can only be: because it does not have its basis in any principles, ideas or concepts, but in a person, who in ancient terminology is still called Christ."³⁰ Naga Christianity too must be centred around the person of Christ and a 'nagaized Christianity' will be one in which Christ incarnates himself in the Naga culture, a Christ whom the Nagas can call their very own. We have noted that when the pioneer Baptist missionaries of Mizoram proclaimed Jesus as "the vanquisher of the Devil...", it was "Good News to the Mizos." We need Christological titles which will answer to the needs of the Nagas.

In the pages of the New Testament and in the history of Christian theology, Christological titles like Messiah, Lord, King, Logos and Wisdom were adaptations of terminologies current and meaningful at the time for applying them to Christ. In the same way, a Naga Christology must find more suitable titles, figures and images to express the reality of what Christ stands for them.

So far the Christ the Nagas know is not really a Naga but a western version of Christ. Professor Takatemjen rightly points out that

Jesus has walked upon our ground for the last one hundred and twenty five years. However, Jesus has not yet learned to speak fluently in the Naga language. He has not fully learned how to put on the Naga dress, We want a Jesus who can sing our folk tunes and dance with us. It is not that he is unwilling. Somehow we thought that He cannot live like one of us. Till now we have shunned him. We drove him away. Somehow, we thought that Jesus was an American. And we thought he could never talk and live like one of us.³¹

Hence, a Christ who is truly Naga is a prerequisite for a true Naga Christianity.

2. Christ as Liberator

What could be the most appropriate title of Christ for the Nagas of the present day? For the past four decades, the Naga society has been characterized by the fact of insurgency. No one and no family has escaped some effect or other of this movement. At its best positive meaning insurgency can be described as a movement for liberation, for recognition and identity of a people. The founding fathers of this movement like Phizo are held in high esteem by Nagas. In this context, Christ as a liberator enabling the Nagas to realize their dreams, hopes and aspirations, would be one who will strike a resonant chord in the hearts of the Nagas.

Such a Naga Christ will not arm himself nor his followers with sophisticated weapons of destruction but with life-giving instruments like love, forgiveness, peace and reconciliation. He will not bring about factional, fratricidal fighting among the Nagas but unite them as brothers and sisters. His liberation will not primarily consist of a political or economic liberation, but will be a more encompassing human liberation. It will be a liberation from all that alienates the Nagas from being authentic human beings and Christians. Christ will be a liberator of the Nagas making them fully human and this will be the real glory of God.

3. Christ as Elder

As already mentioned, for the Naga society, the elder symbolizes the embodiment of wisdom and experience. He is the epitome of the accumulated wisdom of the people and of the society. Thus, he is respected, consulted and honoured. We have also seen that the reason the elders are respected among the Mao Nagas is that they consider them nearer to God and to possess special powers. The Nagas, in fact, see God in their elders. Such a meaningful image which is in the heart of Naga culture can contribute towards making the Nagas feel that Christ is their very own elder.

The various Christological titles found in the pages of the New Testament give us clear examples of how, in the history of Christianity, attempts have been made to make Christ more meaningful and relevant in the various cultural milieu where he and his message were proclaimed. Christological titles are indeed proclamations of faith in what he is for that particular community. If the Nagas say that Jesus is their elder, they are proclaiming their faith in Him who fulfils *par excellence* the role their elders usually fulfil.

4. Christ as Chief

The next embodiment of leadership among the Nagas is that of chieftainship. He is known as the headman too. Christ too is the head of the body which is the Church (Eph. 4: 15-16). We have already pointed out that among the Naga tribes the chief has a dual role to play. He is the pivot around whom all the social and religious function revolves. He is the first man of the village; he opens the village ceremonies, is the first to sow seeds, the first to plant and the first to harvest. He is also responsible for the defence of the village, for peace and harmony, and is the ambassador of the village to other villages.³² He is, in a word, the realization of the best person of the Naga society.

The name of Christ as King, King of kings, Lord and Master in other cultures and contexts should be a clue for the Nagas to give Christ titles which are more meaningful and in tune with their culture. Even though king, lord or master do not conjure up very positive images in the mind of modern society, we still apply these to Christ because they were terms and symbols of a people and a culture that once saw in these figures the fulfilment of their ideal personalities.

For the Naga society, chiefs are not yet out of date. Perhaps, they will continue to symbolize the best of a Naga personality. Hence, calling Christ by these names will make the Nagas feel that Christ is really their own. It is true that none of these titles is sufficient to express the personality of the God-man Jesus Christ.

For that matter, none of the titles given to Christ, be it Lord, King, Son, or any other is adequate. No human category can define the reality of God adequately. These are symbolic and evocative of a reality beyond human grasp and category.

5. Christ as Ancestor

Most of the Naga tribes venerate their ancestors. As we mentioned when speaking about the clan, the ancestor is the one from whom a Naga derives his/her identity and carries his name. Christ is the one who gives us our Christian identity and we are Christ-bearers. Thus, to know Christ under such a title could be evocative to the Naga soul.

These titles are also proclamations of faith, not comprehensive statements of truth. When we say Christ is our Lord and Master, we are proclaiming or exclaiming that seen with the eyes of faith, Christ fulfils the role of a lord for us in so far as our life is controlled by him and runs along the lines of his teaching. We are not making a statement that whatever connotation the term 'lord' has is found in Christ or whatever Christ stands for can be captured by the term lord. What we are trying is to indicate the lines of reflection to make Christ more meaningful to the Naga soul.

The basically tribal situation of the African Churches is very similar to that which we find among the Naga society. The development of African Christology in which Christ is seen as 'chief,' 'ancestor and elder brother,' 'healer' and 'liberator'³³ can be enlightening for the development of Naga Christology as well.

6. Christ as Lijaba

Lijaba in the Ao Naga folk tale is the creator of the world and the God of the fields and vegetation.³⁴ According to the folk tale, Lijaba appeared to two orphaned sisters at the outskirts of a village in the form of a beggar and he was received kindly by the sisters while other more well-to-do people had refused him hospitality. These sisters were expelled from their home by their step-mother with the consent of their father. Though they had

nothing to eat for themselves, they welcomed the beggar. The beggar, as soon as he was received by the sisters, went to their kitchen and began preparing food for them from the grain of rice he had on his head. In the same way, he scratched his legs and put something in the pot and what the sisters saw was a pot filled with well-cooked pork. For the first time in their life they had a delicious meal. Thus, as a reward for their hospitality and kindness, Lijaba had delivered them from their poverty and misery.³⁵

The story of Lijaba is very similar to the Gospel parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25: 31-46) and the general picture of Jesus depicted as the champion of the poor and the marginalized as found in many passages of the Gospels like Lk 14: 12-14, the parable of the choice of guests, Lk 14: 15-24 the parable of the great banquet, and Jn 4: 1-28 on Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

In the story, Lijaba shares the sufferings of the orphaned sisters, he liberates them from their poverty and misery and even acts like a loving mother in contrast to their step-mother by taking the initiative to prepare a delicious meal for them.³⁶ This motherly dimension of speaking about Jesus is something that will enrich the traditional Christian Christology.

7. Christ in Naga Art

So far, the images and pictures of Jesus fondly displayed in the homes and Churches of the Nagas are those of Jesus with typical Caucasian features. Hence, Professor Takatemjen says:

... now, it is necessary for us to welcome the Naga Jesus. We need to recognize him as he really is. This Naga Jesus should look like one of us and be attractive. He has a flat nose and he is yellow. He lives amongst us. Brother Jesus is in our *jhum* fields with our brothers and sisters. He too is poor like us. He loves to be with the downtrodden, defending our cause. He talks our language, sings our songs and even dances with us. He knows our sorrows and our struggles. He knows our dreams. For he came down to us to be identified with us. This is the whole meaning of his incarnation.³⁷

Nagas have had a long tradition of wood carvings which adorn their homes and village gates. Hokishe Sema speaks of the necessity of reviving the traditional Naga art and says:

All Naga tribes have a most remarkable appreciation of carvings in wood for the ornamentation of their houses and *morungs* of the villages. The carvings on the king pillar of the houses indicate the social status of the family. The wood carvings of the Konyak tribe are specially very intricate. Many of them have artistic originality which must be encouraged. The Nagas have good taste in wood carvings, like mithun heads with twine beautiful horns, carvings of tigers, wolves, hornbills with brilliant feathers, etc. These are in keeping with their environment and their habitat. In fact, the Christian leadership in Nagaland should no longer treat them as things of the past or heathenish, as taught by the foreign missionaries. They must encourage them to carve the image of Christ, his disciples, the angels, etc. in wood and adorn their homes and churches with such carvings.³⁸

Images of Jesus and scenes from the life and ministry of Jesus like, Jesus the Good Shepherd, Jesus curing the sick, Jesus and the Samaritan woman, Jesus preaching to the crowd, the Feeding of five thousand men, the Good Samaritan, etc., can be depicted in wood carvings and displayed in churches and homes. Different scenes of salvation history can also be the subject of wood carvings. All these carvings should be done in the context of Naga culture and life. This can be a great means of Catechesis and faith formation.

Presenting Jesus in Naga features can bring Jesus closer to the Nagas. They can more easily identify themselves with Him. In this way a Naga will recognise Jesus in another Naga and this can contribute a great deal to Naga unity and oneness.

8. Traditional Naga Music and Songs in Liturgy

The Nagas are naturally gifted in music and singing. They have a rich tradition of cultural songs on every aspect of Naga life and culture. These songs are: “characterized by historical episodes,

fables, romance, war, life adventure, etc.”³⁹ Unfortunately, this rich tradition has been neglected in the name of Christianity. Lukose Meyase gives a concrete example of this when he says: “Singing of traditional songs is condemned as paganistic even by the present generation of the Nagas. When cultural songs are aired over the radio, the radio is switched off but listened to eagerly when western popular songs are broadcast.”⁴⁰ However, initial attempts to use traditional songs in Christian worship are being made by the Catholic Church in some parishes and are quite well received.⁴¹ In the same way, the use of Naga traditional musical instruments should be revived.

Since Naga Christians have been so long used to western hymns in their liturgy and worship, they need to be instructed to understand the meaningfulness and necessity of using traditional songs. As a distinct race endowed with unique characteristics, the Nagas must find their own unique way of worshipping their Creator. To borrow a worship ritual from the others is tantamount to discrediting their creator. In other words, it would be like saying to God: though you have created us as a distinct race/people, we have to borrow someone else’s dress to come to you.

III. NAGA SACRAMENTOLOGY: NAGAIZING THE SACRAMENTS AND LITURGY

In speaking about new ways of worship and liturgy, the Naga youth, 27 out of 60 (45 %) respondents, felt that there must be a change in the way of worship and talk about ‘inspiring and lively worship service,’ ‘worship through Naga signs and symbols,’ ‘active participation of the congregation’ and ‘an inculturated liturgy.’ These, we feel, can come about only when we develop a Naga sacramentology and liturgy. We shall indicate some examples of how this could be done.

1. Identifying Naga Signs and Symbols

• God’s self-communication took place through human signs and symbols, and the response of human beings to this self-

manifestation of God has to take place also in the same way. Christian sacraments are the celebration in signs and symbols of God's self-revelation and man's response to it. God communicates himself to the Nagas in like manner and the Nagas, in turn, have to respond correspondingly. Therefore, a nagaized sacramentology should identify these signs and symbols. In fact, the relationship between God and human beings in its vertical and horizontal aspects (spirituality and morality) should find expression in signs and symbols in the different moments of human life.

In the act of incarnation, God communicated his love to human beings and this was manifested in the deeds of Jesus. In his life time on earth, Jesus too

used signs and words to establish the Kingdom of God among us. Words and signs were the instruments he used to reach people in order to heal their spiritual and physical illness... He used material things such as water, spittle, touch, food, to bring about spiritual effects. Originating from the ministry of Jesus himself, special actions and words have become means of communicating grace. This is essentially what the sacraments are.⁴²

The Christian Churches continue the ministry of Jesus and should see that these saving acts of Jesus are

relevant to the lives of the people today,... and that "the loving gestures of Christ are directed to the people to meet their real life, to challenge whatever is false in it, and to integrate whatever is good with their faith. Hence, the values, the symbols, the images of the people should be given a place in the sacraments. It is not sufficient to use the symbols of another time and place; such symbols remain dead things, without power to touch the real life of the people using them, for they lack the life-blood response of living people of a particular culture and age."⁴³

The basic reason for adaptation of the signs and symbols of the people is the incarnation itself, for

the principle of incarnation demands that we renounce our too facile rule of uniformity and transposition, in order that

Christ might find on our soil and at the heart of our communities all the human means through which to signify and communicate his salvation. The situation is very embarrassing for our Church, which is reduced to importing quantities of foreign materials for liturgical and sacramental celebrations: texts, vessels, oils, incense, bread, wine... and even Christian names.⁴⁴

The most conspicuous absence of contextualization in sacraments is visible in the celebration of the Eucharist of the Catholic Church. The Catechism of the Catholic Church speaks of this sacrament as “the Sacrament of sacraments” all the other sacraments are ordered to it as to their end.”⁴⁵ Hence, indicating a way to inculturate this sacrament may be a pointer to others.

The Eucharist is the enactment of what Christ came for, did and stood for. It is his sharing of himself, his very life, as the ordinary food and drink for human beings, as a sign and an invitation to all to share themselves, their lives and what they have with others. The challenge lies in making this reality shine through by using meaningful symbols, signs and gestures understandable and efficacious to the Nagas. Are the symbols, signs and gestures used, fostering this kind of intelligibility and meaningfulness? This can happen only when efficacious signs (signs with the aptitude to signify what they stand for) are used. In this connection, Samuel Rayan, speaking of Jesus’ own use of meaningful and efficacious signs says:

Had he thought of ordering some exotic food or drink for the celebration of his Eucharist, say, from Rome or from Sydney, instead of taking the bread and wine that were on the table before him and were the common food and drink of his people and actually belong together with them and their hands, and homes and fields, he would have acted in a ‘disincarnate’ manner and betrayed his humanity, and left his world of men and things unredeemed.⁴⁶

a. Naga Eucharist

Applied to the Nagas, the present Eucharistic celebration shows just the opposite of what Jesus did, though using the very

same elements. It is the importing of some 'exotic food' and 'drink' because neither the wheat, from which the host is made, nor the grape wine is the product of their fields and much less the ordinary food and drink of the Nagas. It is true that "a very literal interpretation of the species used has prevailed for centuries in both East and West: bread made from wheat, wine from the vine. This interpretation belongs to ecclesiastical discipline and not to dogma as such,"⁴⁷ says, Sempore.

The most apt Eucharistic species for the Nagas would be wine from rice (*madhu* or rice-beer) and bread from rice, as rice is their staple food. Rice and rice-beer can truly be called the food and drink of the Nagas. Christ taking these and transforming or changing them into his body and blood would mean transforming the Nagas themselves into his own being.

The Baptists too often have communion service using some biscuits and fruit juice as symbols of Jesus' body and blood. For them it is only a symbolic enactment. Even so, the more suitable symbols would be bread from rice and rice-beer. The above quotations, though spoken in the light of the African tribal context, are very much applicable and relevant to the Naga situation as well.

b. *Macha Kozü*: Naga Baptism

According to the Mao Naga tradition, initiation into the society for a male child of two to three years, is done in the following manner. On an appointed day, the ceremony is performed in the morning. The father of the child to be initiated fasts (drinking only rice-beer). A number of the male young children of the same clan fetch water from the spring in yam leaves. The father of the child to be initiated pours the water on the head of the child. This is immediately followed by the child giving a yell of delight in Naga style declaring himself as a male citizen. The ceremony culminates in a solemn banquet for all the children. This, according to Father Linus Neli, a Mao Naga, is "the baptism of a Mao male child."⁴⁸ Traditionally this ceremony was meant only for male children. But it could be extended to the female children as well.

What is important is the identification of the signs and symbols used in this ceremony and adapt them. Similarly other Naga tribes too have initiation ceremonies using various signs and symbols. These can also be incorporated into the nagaized Christian ceremonies.

2. Identifying Moments/Events of Grace in Naga Culture

The sevenfold sacramental scheme in the Catholic Church is based on the recognition that the number seven is the biblical symbol of perfection or completion; that this number seven covers the peak moments of human life and that through these, the saving deeds of Christ are made efficacious. This is what the Catechism of the Catholic Church says:

The seven sacraments touch all the stages and all the important moments of Christian life: they give birth and increase, healing and mission to the Christian's life of faith. There is thus a certain resemblance between the stages of natural life and the stages of the spiritual life.⁴⁹

Following this analogy, the seven sacraments are grouped under three headings: Sacraments of Christian initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist), Sacraments of healing (penance, anointing of the sick) and the Sacraments at the service of communion (holy orders and marriage).⁵⁰ One thing needed to be asked is whether seven stages of life or the sub-division into three categories represent the stages or peak moments of life for the Nagas. When speaking about the traditional Naga society, we had pointed out that ceremonies accompanied birth, initiation, marriage and death. These are the peak moments of life for the Nagas. Nagaized sacramentology must take into account these in the celebration of the sacraments. Symbols and signs and the names given to these ceremonies could also replace those of the traditional Western Christianity.

Though other Christian Churches do not accept the sevenfold sacramental system, they too must examine the meaningfulness of whatever they accept in the light of Naga culture. It

will be untrue to the Naga culture and for that matter to human experience to say that we do not need signs and symbols in our relationship with God. As we need them in our human life, so do we, in our spiritual life.

3. Naga Sacred Days: Days of *Genna*

Genna, as prohibition, was observed by the whole village or by an individual family alone. Most of the *gennas* are annual rituals marking significant events in the predominantly agricultural based life cycle of the Nagas. Even minor violations of these taboos can be accompanied by a spell of disease. Hence, strict observance is enforced.

These *gennas* can be considered as ways of sanctifying the days in a month. It is parallel to the Christian observance of Sundays and other days of obligation. In fact, according to H. D'Souza,⁵¹ *genna* was not a mere taboo with only a negative meaning. It had a positive aspect too. In its positive sense, it meant the celebration of life, of re-building one's energies, one's life; in short, it was a day to rejuvenate. A Christian Sunday fulfils the same function of rest and rejuvenation, physically and spiritually. Hence, Sunday, or the Lord's Day, for the Naga Christians could be called the Lord's *Genna*. Hence, the challenge for the Naga Christian Churches is to adapt the term *genna* for Sunday rest and to give a new meaning to their traditional idea of *genna*. Thus a discovery of the original meaning of *genna* will make Naga Christians see the Sunday rest in terms of their culture.

4. Traditional Naga Festivals

We have already indicated that the life of Nagas is well punctuated by feasts and the society being agrarian, most of the festivals revolve around cultivation. To the Nagas, a festival is "more than a mere pass-time celebration. It is a period of re-invigorating their fatigued agricultural life, and an occasion for commemorating their culture. It is a time of renewal of life and enrichment of interpersonal relationships."⁵² Few other occasions can be richer moments of grace than the time of festivals.

Festivals are also “times of imparting cultural education. Through songs, dance, and folktales, the younger generation learn their traditions and culture.”⁵³ In fact, we could also say that through these festivals, the youth learn to sing their traditional songs and compose them too. They also learn to dance the cultural dances. These festivals were really a school of culture and tradition. The neglect of these has rendered the youth of today rootless.

Festivals in the western Christian calendar like Christmas and Easter were occasions for catechesis and faith formation and these feasts were also taken over from what were formerly pagan festivities. The same adaptation should be done for Naga Christianity. Each Naga tribe has a number of festivities every year. At least the main festivals of each tribe should be moments of grace for Naga Christianity.

5. Feast of Merit: Naga Christmas

We have shown that the Naga Feast of Merit was a feast in which the richer ones of the society share their abundance with others. It was a sign of thanksgiving to God for their wealth as well as to show equality and oneness with others notwithstanding their riches. God’s sharing of his riches with humanity by sending his Son to be born as a human being could not be better commemorated by the Nagas than in the Feast of Merit. Hence, Christmas for a nagaized Christianity could be the Feast of Merit and this could be celebrated annually.

6. Diplomatic Feast: Naga Good Friday/Easter

Naga Diplomatic Feast is basically a feast of reconciliation between feuding villages or tribes. Good Friday/ Easter too celebrates the reconciliation between sinful humanity and God through the mediation of Jesus, fully man and fully God. Reconciliation among the Nagas can have a fuller meaning and significance when it is done within the framework of God reconciling humanity with himself through his beloved Son, Jesus. This too could be an annual celebration in the Naga liturgical

calendar. The yearly celebration will foster unity and reconciliation if there are feuds, and it will strengthen peace and harmony where these already exist.

We have tried to indicate how liturgy and worship should be inculturated. There is a yearning for Naga liturgy and worship from the people as expressed by Lukose Meyase when he says:

There is a great desire to bring forth a liturgy which will be purely Naga. A complete revival of our liturgy will take place when the liturgy is according to Naga culture. The more we follow our culture, the deeper will be our religious experience. If Christ died for the Nagas, we should worship him as Nagas in and through our culture.⁵⁴

7. **Nagaized Church Structure: *Morung***

Traditional Naga religion had no formal place of worship, sacrifices or rituals. Open place or individual houses were places of worship. However, nagaized Christianity will need a place of worship (church) which will be considered truly Naga. Today “all the churches in Nagaland are mere imitations of churches in Europe and America.”⁵⁵ Similarly, Takatemjen says:

Today in Nagaland, most of the church buildings are built like monuments at the cost of crores of rupees. Even in the villages, the only structure that stands out in the midst of thatched houses is the church building, something alien to us and unnatural. The most natural way of building a church building in the present village context would be to build a less conspicuous building which would be identical with the other houses in the villages. A church can be built in the design of the *Morung* thus creating an atmosphere where a Naga would feel proud that his church is very much a part of his culture.⁵⁶

Imitations of foreign architectural designs contribute to the westernization of Christianity among the Nagas. Church structures with local and indigenous designs will similarly contribute to the nagaization of Christianity. Christ is not a foreigner to the Nagas; therefore he does not need a foreign house to dwell in.

The choice of the design of the *morung* seems quite appropriate. First of all, *morung* was the only common structure in the traditional Naga society. Secondly, and more importantly, most of the functions and services rendered by the institution of *morung* are today handled, or supposed to be handled, by the Churches.

8. Priesthood: The Naga Model

Among the Naga tribes, the existence of a sort of professional priesthood seems to be most evident among the Chakrüs of the Chakhesang group of tribes. This tribe has priesthood open to both males and females, who are to be unmarried and are entirely maintained by the community.⁵⁷ It seems to be quite clear that the traditional societies did not have a separate class or clan of priests. One may also conclude that there was no professional priesthood in the sense that no selection of candidates was made, no training was given to them and no payment was made to those who function as priests. It does not mean that anybody and everybody could become priests. There are also indications that women too could perform certain priestly functions. It is quite understandable that a less organized religion like the traditional Naga religion did not have these things clearly demarcated. We are not advocating that the new organized nagaized Christianity should go back to this situation of fluidity. However, the values implied in that fluid state should be picked up and incorporated in the new situation.

‘Qualifications of age, experience and freedom from serious deformity’ (cf Ch. 1, IV) were of primary importance. The combination of age and experience can be taken to mean knowledge by experience of many years of life. It also seems to stress on the charismatic nature of the priesthood. There may be many people who have had a long experience of life but not all these can function as priests. Thus, besides age and experience, there was something, a charism, that qualified them to be priests. The idea that a priest must be free from serious deformity, obviously seems to refer to physical deformity. But it must be remembered that Naga traditional religion does not make much of a distinction between the physical and the spiritual. The physical is often the mirror of

the spiritual. Hence, freedom from deformity can also be understood to include the sense of integrity of life.

The second element is the choice by the people. There are no indications that people chose or elected priests; but the fact that a priest had to earn this privilege by virtue of his knowledge and experience shows that people had a say in this.

The third idea that emerges is that priesthood was basically an exercise in mediatorship between God/spirits and human beings. A priest was one who possessed something of the divine in his human nature, and this gave him access to the divine realm. This is very much akin to the idea of priesthood in the New Testament especially as developed by the author of the Letter to the Hebrews (9: 15: mediator of a new covenant).⁵⁸ Another significant element is that what is important in the priesthood is not so much being a doer or performer of things, but *being* someone close to the divine realm.

The fourth idea of traditional Naga priesthood as exercised by a wide variety of people is very significant. This element can be taken to be in tune with the emphasis Vatican II put on the common priesthood of the laity. It states: "The laity are made to share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ..."⁵⁹ The same conciliar document further says: "If they are consecrated a kingly priesthood and a holy nation (cf. 1 Pet. 2: 4-10), it is in order that they may in all their actions offer spiritual sacrifices and bear witness to Christ all over the world."⁶⁰

The nagaized Christian Church should take serious note of these conciliar statements and make the people of God share in the ministry of the Church. This could be done by some lay leaders as permanent deacons and instituting other lay ministries. This is not only following the spirit of Vatican II, but also that of the authentic Naga tradition. In this regard, it may be remarked that the Naga Catholic Church needs to emulate the example of other Churches.

In short, whether it be in selection, formation, ministry or life, the Christian priesthood must take into account the values

and spirit of the traditional Naga priesthood and build the new nagaized Christian priesthood on those.

We have shown some indications of how a Naga sacramentology could be developed. Much research still needs to be done on identifying Naga symbols and signs. One needs to identify, for instance, the signs/gestures/postures of the Naga way of showing reverence, worship, respect, etc.

IV. NAGAIZED CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

St. Francis de Sales, in the preface to his book *Introduction to the Devout Life* comparing himself to Glycera, the bouquet maker in Pliny's *Historia Naturalis*, says:

Glycera, the bouquet maker, knew so well how to diversify and arrange her flowers that with the same flowers she made a great variety of bouquets. ... I neither can or will, nor indeed should I, write in this *Introduction* anything different from what has already been published by our predecessors on this subject. The flowers that I present to you are the same, but the bouquet that I have made of them differs from theirs because it has been made up in a different order and way.⁶¹

The same thing can be said about the Naga spirituality we are proposing. It will not be something entirely new. But we can say that it will be a different arrangement of the same bouquet of flowers that others too have used.

The nagaized Christian spirituality can be defined as the unique and distinctive arrangement of the bouquet of flowers according to the disposition of the Naga soul towards its creator and that of the creator to the Naga soul. Hence, the point of departure for a Naga spirituality is the Naga experience of the numinous. Centuries before they came into contact with western Christianity, the Nagas had their own spirituality, although not so developed. The developed contemporary spiritualities of both the western and eastern Christianities too grew out of their traditions, philosophy and way of life. The nagaized Christian spirituality also must tread along the same path.

1. A Holistic Spirituality

The traditional Naga religion, as already seen, is usually called animism which means an experience that sees the whole reality of the universe under one category. There is no distinction between the material, the animal, the human and the divine worlds. In this holistic view of the universe, there is an all-powerful creator God who is the Supreme Spirit, though he does not usually interfere in the daily life of the people.

In this worldview, life is not compartmentalized into the spiritual, the profane or the neutral. Every aspect of life is interconnected. The youth often mention 'practising what one preaches.' What is practised must be in harmony with what is believed and preached. Hence, there cannot be only Sunday or feast day Christians nor only nominal Christians.

The western Christianity inherited by the Nagas have compartmentalised life into the spiritual and the profane; the one not necessarily having an influence on the other. As a result one could be a very spiritual and holy person while in Church or praying, and quite another type of person in business or in politics. This type of split personality spirituality is entirely foreign to the Naga ethos. In a truly Naga spirituality, prayer uplifts life and life is drawn to prayer. One goes to Church because one is a good person and one works honestly and sincerely because one has, while in Church, imbibed God's own spirit of truthfulness.

2. Nature-friendly Spirituality

It is only the influence of modern development that has made the Nagas destroy the forests, animals and other components of nature. The traditional Naga society, like many other tribal societies was friendly and harmonious with nature. It is true that the Nagas still practise the *jhum* method of cultivation but it was never a wanton destruction of the forest. Sites were carefully selected and divided so that entire forests are not laid waste in the cutting as well as in the burning of the *jhum* fields. Then, sufficient number of years is given for the land to lie fallow so that everything

can grow back again. Besides, nature and its products are made use of only to the extent that they were needed for their hearth and homes, and only the amount needed for the purpose was taken. Natural products were never meant for commercialization.

The same was true of animals, domestic and wild. Hunting for the pleasure of hunting was never carried out. Animals were hunted for the purposes of food and there was no wanton killing of these. In this connection, mention may be made that the Nagas are often despised for eating the meat of dogs and accused of being cruel to animals. For the Nagas, a dog is like any other domesticated animal like pigs, cows, goats, etc. It has no special status as it has in some cultures. If other domestic animals can be killed for food and no condemnation is passed, there is no reason why the Nagas should be condemned for killing dogs for food.

All in all, the traditional Naga attitude to nature is that of friendliness and close relationship. If this has been vitiated of late, it does not accrue from authentic Naga culture. Hence, a spirituality of close relationship with nature, being its responsible and caring stewards, is in true harmony with the Naga mentality.

3. Spirituality of Loyalty to Community, Tribe and Clan

Loyalty can be one of the main key concepts of Nagaized Christian spirituality. A true Naga is one who is loyal to his family, clan tribe or community. The demands of loyalty can make a Naga feel that no sacrifice or hardship is big enough to make or undergo. It is true that in the past this loyalty was understood in a restricted sense. But a Naga Christian with his fundamental and overriding loyalty to Christ and to the values of his kingdom, will subject all his other loyalties to the loyalty he has to Christ. This will not be an impoverishment of his natural loyalties but rather an enrichment and a fulfilment. His loyalty, limited only to clan and family, has often led him to destroy others. Now his loyalty to Christ will make him, not life threatening, but life enhancing and giving.

4. Spirituality of Concreteness

Naga languages, like most tribal ones, are not known for abstract concepts and ideas, but is rather concrete and practical.

Similarly, or perhaps consequently, Naga life does not consist in abstract philosophical or theological discourses but in concrete and down to earth actions. For such a people, spiritualities of silent contemplation may not be advisable. It cannot be the launching pad. Therefore, action oriented spiritualities must be devised.

5. Spirituality of Spontaneity

If we were to define the character of a Naga in one word, it could be characterised by spontaneity. A Naga does not worry too much about how he should respond to a situation, what he should say on an occasion, etc. He responds to a person and reacts to a situation on the spur of the moment.

If we look at the Nagas at worship services too, they do not have prepared prayers or hymns. They sing and pray spontaneously. This, perhaps, is one of the reasons of the popularity of Pentecostal and Revival Churches because they encourage spontaneity. Charismatic movements too are popular for the same reason. Hence, a spirituality that will ring resonant chords in the Naga hearts will be one that encourages spontaneity and builds on it.

6. A Musical Spirituality

By musical spirituality, we mean a spirituality that will be nurtured and nourished by singing and by listening to music. If contemplative spirituality is one which consists in the silent enjoyment of the divine, musical spirituality is a way to the divine and enhancement of the self through music.

We have already said that the Nagas are gifted singers and music lovers. They can spend hours on end in singing together. We have also referred to the fact of how many Nagas were first drawn to Christianity by the melodious voice of the first Assamese evangelist Godhula. Every Naga tribe too has numerous Gospel songs⁶² composed in their own languages and these are very popular especially among the youth. In fact, these songs are part and parcel of the worship service and are usually rendered as special numbers. M. M. Thomas, a leading Christian theologian

in India, and a former Governor of Nagaland, has this to say on Naga music: "The folk and tribal music of the Nagas is in full harmony with the rhythm of nature."⁶³

Today, the musical instruments most often used are the guitar and the electric organ, both of which are foreign to the Naga tradition. The use or revival of traditional Naga music will not be complete without making use of the traditional musical instruments in Christian worship.

7. Spirituality of Social Orientation

Community orientation is also one of the distinguishing marks of the Nagas. We have pointed out also that a Naga's identity is in belonging to a particular clan or tribe. Therefore, a spirituality that fosters mainly individual growth and individual salvation does not have a place among the Nagas. What a person does affects the others, and what he does not do does the same. If a person does not go to Church, it affects his neighbour. In a nagaized Christianity, one cannot say that religion is a private affair. Instead, it is a social affair. In fact, this is what true Christianity should be anywhere. Christians are keepers of their brothers and sisters. Therefore, a nagaized Christian would be one who re-discovers his/her true Naganess. That is why one of our interviewees said: "Our tradition is as rich as Christianity as regards love for the poor, the widow, and hospitality to strangers. For the sake of hospitality to strangers even *genna* observance can be indirectly violated."⁶⁴

8. Spirituality of Father-God and Mother-God

What we have indicated above is the horizontal element in Naga spirituality. Now we come to the vertical dimension. Western Christian spirituality has been dominated by a spirituality of the masculinity of God, the Father. Only of late are the feminist theologians trying to discover the feminine dimension of God or the divine.

The experience of Naga traditional religion is that of both the feminine as well as the masculine aspects of the divine. The Nagas believe that the Supreme Being who lives above, beyond

the blue sky is the Father-God. In fact, He is identified with heaven itself. In the same way, the Mother-God who dwells on the earth is identified with the earth itself.

Hence, they call the union of the heavenly father and mother when they see cloudy and misty weather. It is believed that often they have union with one another, thereby creating human beings. The Chakhesangs call the heaven as father unseen *tü apu* and the earth as mother *cejü apü* which can be seen. This concept has given rise to the use of God in feminine gender. Chakhesangs and Angamis, therefore, call *Ukümünupü* and *Ukepenuopfü* respectively.⁶⁵

Naga society, though patriarchal, has a very strong sense of equality between man and woman. It is, therefore, in a sound position to contribute towards a spirituality which will emphasize on the equality between the sexes basing itself on the equal dual experience of the divine.

9. Spirituality of a God who is Near

One negative element of animistic religions is a belief in a Supreme Being who is all goodness, but distant and seemingly unconcerned about the daily affairs of human beings. The beings that man constantly comes into contact are the spirits, especially the malevolent ones who frequently harass them. Therefore, they have to be constantly appeased out of fear. In this regard, the God of Jesus who is near, whose providence rules the world, who cares for and is concerned for all, can be presented as the best choice: “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God’s sight. But even the hairs of your head are counted. Do not be afraid, you are of more value than many sparrows” (Lk 12: 6-7; Matt 10: 30-31; see also Matt 6: 25-34; Lk 12: 22-31), can be the antidote. Jesus Christ, Lord over all principalities and powers, can also put away their fears and anxieties about the evil spirits. Thus, a Naga Christian spirituality, while being solidly based on their age old traditions, will also be enhanced by the Christic experience of God. The God of Jesus is a loving Father who is addressed “abba” and he cares daily for his children.

10. Spirituality in Joy and Sorrow

The relationship between human beings and God in the traditional Naga religion was only in terms of crisis. The goodness of God was taken for granted. He would not do any harm to the human beings. Only the evil spirits were the ones causing harm. Therefore, these spirits were to be appeased and placated. The need to worship God, the Supreme Being, to praise him, thank him when everything goes on well, was not considered necessary. However, in times of sorrow, sickness or when no other alternative was available recourse to God was made. Hence, there is a need to develop a spirituality that is not merely pragmatic and utilitarian but God-centred.

The positive element in this attitude may be contrasted with the tendency in some Christian spirituality which makes human beings perpetual spiritual infants always dependent on God and crying out to him for anything and everything. However, a dimension of establishing a close relationship with God and keeping up that relationship by developing a certain system of worship, praise and adoration suited to the Naga tradition as well as expressing another dimension of God-human relationship is needed in Naga Christian spirituality.

11. Bible based Spirituality

Next to the person of Christ, the Bible was given importance by the youth in their response to the questionnaire. In fact, it is quite logical as the Bible is God in human words and expressions. We have already seen how the Bible is popular among the Nagas. The importance attached to the Bible is spoken in terms of a proper and deep knowledge of the Bible, taking the Word of God as guide, etc. This Bible based spirituality is something in syntony with Naga experience. However, a word of caution needs to be given. The Bible is not like a book of recipe, to find ready-made answers for all one's troubles and difficulties. The Bible also should not be used for polemical purposes only. This would be a misuse of the Bible. It is primarily the Word of God to be listened to with

humility and docility in order that one may understand what God has to say.

If Christianity is to be truly incarnated into the Naga culture, the development of a genuine Naga spirituality is a must. The Naga youth, in their response to our questionnaire, spoke of Naga Christianity in which holiness of life flourishes. The Naga Christian spirituality will be a way of life in docility to the guidance of the Spirit of Christ. Then, the point of departure is the experience of the numinous or divine by the traditional Naga society. However undeveloped, unsystematized a religion may be, every religion, including animistic religions, have their unique path to the numinous. The traditional Naga religion too had its path to the divine and this was sufficient for them to realize their ultimate destiny of life. Now that they have become Christians, this traditional way should encounter the Christic path for their mutual enrichment.

V. NAGA ECCLESIOLOGY

Being united in the love and peace of a Naga Christ and practising this reality in tune with the best of their traditions (spirituality), the nagaized Christianity next needs to be organized and structured in visible images and models understandable and meaningful to the Nagas. This would be a Naga ecclesiology.

The Church of the Naga dreams, as already pointed out, should be less institutional while being animational, missionary, and always open to new avenues of ministry. It is to be ecumenical, warm, simple, caring and loving, and above all, in tune with the Naga spirit of democracy. The Naga Church should be the conscience of society as also a participatory Church in the traditional Naga way. All the members should have a say, in one way or another, in the decision making process in the Church. We shall attempt to elaborate on some of these.

1. Participatory Decision Making Church

When the early Christian Church began to be patronized by the Roman Empire, one of the most visible adaptations the

Church made was the adoption of the organizational structure of the Empire. One of the most outstanding features of traditional Naga society as pointed out in chapter one, is its democratic spirit. When Naga villagers had to make a decision on some issue, the procedure they followed was the following. The chief, the members of the village council, and the heads of different clans in the village would sit together and deliberate on the issue in question. Everyone present would be given a chance to give his opinion on the matter, even if it was similar to someone else's opinion, he would be entitled to present his view-point. Only then would the issue be decided. In this way, the decision would be a common one as well as that of the individuals.

The Naga Christian Churches must build upon this democratic spirit of their traditional society in order to build a truly Naga Church. The Catholic Bishops of India, in their 'Statement on Lay Participation,' made the following point:

... the animation of the laity calls for the practice of non-dominating leadership (Jn. 13: 14-15) at all levels of the Church. This style is most effective in bringing out the best in others. As Bishops we shall strive to provide a model of this kind of leadership so that through the combination of power and gentleness, so characteristic of the Spirit (Acts 2: 1-4; Gal. 5: 22-26), we will be able to energize the people of God.⁶⁶

This, in fact, is in tune with what Pope John Paul II says in his Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* when he exhorts the laity "to take an active, conscientious and responsible part in the mission of the Church."⁶⁷ The Naga Baptist Churches, on the whole, have gone a long way in this regard; but the Catholic Church still needs to be nagaized in her decision making process. We have attempted to develop the theme of active involvement of the laity in the work of evangelization.⁶⁸ Similarly, the laity in the new Naga Church should be active participants in every sphere of the Church's activity.

2. A More Ecumenical Church

The denominational rivalry among the different Churches of the Nagas has been a bane to the cause of Naga unity. Hence,

the spirit of lively ecumenism is one of the most desirable dreams of the Nagas. In fact, some of the youth speak of a non-denominational Church for the Nagas of the new millennium.

Bishop Jose Mukala of Kohima, in his conversation with the author, shared his vision of the diocese. In the spirit of his motto "Building the Body of Christ" (Eph. 4: 12) the Bishop said: "I would like to consider all the people of Nagaland: the Catholics, the Baptists and the others, as the body of Christ, the community to be built up, to make them fully mature in Christ."⁶⁹

We have mentioned earlier that till date there has been no ecumenical effort worth the name in Nagaland. However, there is a silver lining on the horizon, and every Naga Christian should contribute his/her mite to make the silver lining brighter.

a. Know Other Churches and shed Prejudices

One of the stumbling blocks for ecumenism is ignorance about other Churches. This ignorance is often the breeding ground for unfounded prejudices and rivalries. Hence, efforts must be made by every Church to enlighten its members on other denominations. Often the only thing the members of one Church know about the others is their black spots. Genuine attempts must be made to know each other better.

b. Stress Points of Unity, not of Differences

While knowledge about other Churches can be a big step forward, it is not sufficient. One must emphasize on the bonds of unity that hold together the different Christian Churches. The bond in Christ cannot be emphasized enough. Texts like that of Gal. 3: 27-28, should be a constant point of focus to realize that once united in him all other differences are minor or accidental. Father Matthew Keemattam, one of the senior priests of the diocese of Kohima, commenting on the desire of the Naga youth to have a non-denominational Church in Nagaland, says: "The idea of one Church may be utopian but unity in Christ must be accepted. Christians of different denominations should come together for common purposes and should work unitedly while accepting their differences."⁷⁰

c. Celebrate Unity

Once points of unity are realized, there is a need to symbolize this unity by having common functions and celebrations of unity and oneness in Christ. Theoretical knowledge of the points of unity is one side of the coin but practical recognition of these must be seen in common celebrations of Christian festivals like Christmas, Easter, as well as organizing other common ecumenical functions like prayer sessions and Bible services, all of which will enhance the ecumenical spirit.

d. Christianity beyond Denominations or Individual Churches

As the Nagas must go beyond the differences of individual tribes, so must the Naga Churches strive to look beyond the differences among individual Churches or denominations. This may be what the youth mean when they speak about a 'non-denominational' Naga Church.

The youth also spoke about a Naga Church which will be filled with Christian values. This will be a Church filled with the values of the Kingdom of God. It will be an invisible Church, a Church of the hearts and minds of people imbued with Christian values and principles. The priority in this would be the cultivation and practice of the values of the Kingdom like love, peace, justice, equality, etc., without being too concerned about increasing the membership of one's particular Church. The tendency of every individual Church today is to first preach membership of individual Churches without much concern about whether these members practise Christian values and principles. The Naga Christian Churches should make preaching about the kingdom values their first priority.

3. A Missionary Church

Although the Naga Christian Church is 125 years old, still, Naga Christians need missionaries to evangelize and to re-evangelize them. The growth of Christianity in both Nagaland

and Manipur as shown in the table⁷¹ below, indicates a regular increase. Hence, there is still scope for further growth, especially in Manipur.

| State | 1961 | 1971 | 1981 | 1991 | Trend |
|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------------|
| Nagaland | 52.98 % | 66.76 % | 80.21 % | 87.47 % | Regular increase |
| Manipur | 19.49 % | 26.03 % | 29.68 % | 34.11 % | Regular increase |

a. Evangelization

The Naga society is not yet numerically fully Christian. To make Nagas cent percent Christian is also one of the dreams for the new century. Thirteen percent are not yet Christians. They need to be evangelized. There seems to be a stagnation in the growth of Christianity. This is perhaps because of the lack of missionary zeal among the Naga Christians.

Besides the above, other areas in the Northeast like Tripura, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh are largely non-Christian states. Since missionaries from far-flung corners of the globe have come to evangelize them (Nagas), they in turn must go out to their neighbours as missionaries. "Missionaries are made, not born; and as in every worthwhile vocation the making process is long and difficult."⁷² The Nagas need to be made missionaries, first among their own brothers and sisters and then to others as well because becoming missionaries is a sign of growing into mature Christians.

There is also a slacking in the enthusiasm to take up ministries in the Church among the Baptists as well as the Catholics. It is true that the Church personnel among the Baptists are entirely indigenous but the youth of today are not enthusiastic for ministry in the Church. The lure of other more lucrative careers seems to be stronger.

The Catholic Church is still heavily dependent on the non-Naga clergy from outside. In its presence of about 50 years.

Manipur Nagas have ten priests, while Nagaland has six of them. Naga Catholics of Manipur are about 50,000,⁷³ while those of Nagaland are about 30,000.⁷⁴ Thus, there is only one Naga Catholic priest for 5,000 Naga Catholics. Hence, there is a great need for the sons of the Naga soil to become missionaries among their own people.

b. Re-Evangelization/New Evangelization

We have already pointed out that Naga Christianity is not what it should be. The Nagas need to be re-evangelized in the sense which Pope John Paul II speaks about certain Churches which “have lost a living sense of faith, ... and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel.”⁷⁵ Our evaluation of Naga Christianity makes us feel that re-evangelization is the need of the hour among the Nagas. To meet this need, missionaries are still needed from outside as well as from within the Naga soil. Promoting local missionaries for the purpose of re-evangelizing the Nagas may be one of the effective ways of deepening Naga Christianity or nagaizing Christianity. Speaking about the need for new evangelization in Sri Lanka, M. Zago says:

Today in a nation divided by war for ethnic reasons, proclamation and Christian practice must stress the fundamental law of charity and forgiveness. In fact this goes beyond the needs of social justice, whose promotion is often proposed as a divisive struggle. Instead of social justice a Christian vision must be understood and lived within charity. This is a message that can contribute to national reconciliation.⁷⁶

The Naga situation faces similar challenges and the new evangelization among the Nagas must stress the need to go beyond the demands of justice. That is why we began our discussion on a new way of being Naga Christians with notions of Christian love (charity), fellowship and peace. To go beyond social justice to peace, love and unity in the new evangelization will be “an integral human promotion.”⁷⁷

c. Qualities expected of Missionaries

Missionaries are known, in the broad sense, as people dedicated to the work of evangelization. Therefore, they include native missionaries as well as those from outside the region and abroad. Missionaries are needed; but what is needed more are missionaries with certain qualities. The Naga youth answered the question *What according to you are the qualities missionaries to the Nagas and also Naga priests/religious/pastors/leaders should have?* (Q. 11). The table given below indicates the qualities admired in the missionaries according to the order of importance. We are giving only the first five⁷⁸ qualities of missionaries listed by the respondents. Each of these five has two qualities equally rated.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------------|----------------|------------|---------------|------------------|
| Humility, | Faith in God | Sincerity | Man of Prayer | Efficiency, |
| Impartiality | Exemplary life | Dedication | Adaptability | Self-sacrificing |

To a similar question to the Nagas in general, *According to you who is an ideal missionary?* (Q.19), the leading qualities listed were the following: An ideal missionary is one who is simple and honest, identifies himself with the people, has a deep spirituality, is impartial, discourages tribalism, is a friend and guide, not corrupted or money-minded, practises what he preaches and is adaptable to any circumstance.⁷⁹

What is noticeable in both the responses is the emphasis on human qualities. People want their missionaries first and foremost to be good human beings.

d. Traits of Missionaries not appreciated

To the question *What are the things you do not like to see in a missionary?* (Q. 20), the following observations were made. Money-minded and luxurious missionaries, those who do not live according to what they preach, those who boast, who are partial to the rich and powerful and go in for favouritism, those who display superiority complexes, those who are

racist, neglect pastoral activities and have no deep spiritual life are the traits not appreciated in missionaries.⁸⁰ Here too the stress is on human qualities.

4. New Patterns of Ministry

To the question *Is there anything you would like your Church to change?* (Q.10), 27 out of 60 (45 %) said that there should be a change in the patterns of the Church's ministry. Some others also suggested that there should be a change in the ways of worship in order to make the liturgy more lively, meaningful and relevant. Though many did not specify the changes they would like their Churches to make, some suggested that more stress or emphasis should be given to the teaching of Christian doctrines. More lay participation and introduction of permanent diaconate for both men and women were also suggested.

a. Holistic Mission

According to Takatemjen,

traditionally, Baptists have emphasized on the great commission of Matthew 28: 18-20, as the basis for mission... and interpreted the great commission in terms of a rather narrow evangelism. However, during the past recent years a more holistic notion of mission has emerged which combines both social action and evangelism.⁸¹

This realization is vital for Naga Christianity. The traditional Naga view of life does not have a dichotomy between the spiritual and the material. It is not even biblical. Naga Christianity has to cater to the whole person, body and soul. More than at any other time, the Naga society needs a transformation today. It needs to transform its social structures, institutions and way of life. A Christianity that addresses only matters of the soul will not be complete. This realization has been clearly pointed out in the book "From Darkness to Light," published by Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) on the the occasion of the celebration of 125 years of Christianity in Nagaland. It says:

The present ministry of the Naga churches is inadequate. It is largely confined to the spiritual dimension per se. Thus burning issues such as identity crisis, ethnic problems, factional clashes, ecological problems, etc., are not effectively handled. Further, the mission of the churches is understood primarily in terms of planting churches beyond the region. The Naga churches must come out from the 19th century evangelistic tradition of mission and must focus on both otherworldly and this-worldly. The incarnation of God in Jesus Christ challenges us to take seriously the realities of here and now. Our mission and ministry has to be holistic in approach.⁸²

The Catholic Church among the Nagas has not fared much better. Its social dimension mainly consisted in catering to the educational needs of the Nagas. It has and is rendering yeoman service in this field, but its contribution to the economic needs and other concerns of the society has been negligible. The Synod of Bishops in 1971 had clearly enunciated that

action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.⁸³

Following on the heels of the 1971 Synod of Bishops, Pope Paul VI, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* said:

Evangelization, ... is a complex process made up of varied elements: the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative. These elements may appear to be contradictory, indeed mutually exclusive. In fact they are complementary and mutually enriching. Each one must always be seen in relationship with others.⁸⁴

Pope John Paul II's Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* especially article 58 speaks the same language as his predecessor when he says:

The mission ad gentes is still being carried out today, for the most part in the southern regions of the world, where action

on behalf of integral development and liberation from all forms of oppression is most urgently needed. The Church has always been able to generate among the peoples she evangelizes a drive towards progress. Today, more than in the past, missionaries are being regarded as promoters of development ...⁸⁵

It suffices to indicate that Churches in Nagaland today cannot pretend to be genuinely interested in the spread of the Good News if they choose to ignore this dimension of Christianity. All the Churches together can be and are in fact, powerful instruments of social transformation. Common endeavours in this regard is one which every Naga can look forward to in the new millennium. Hence, the new Naga Church needs to play a prophetic role, “take a stand and act against the injustice,” be “an instrument of justice and social integration and transformation,” and “to look into the root causes of socio-economic injustice that have made life very miserable for the majority of the people here on earth. Short of this the Church might become less relevant to many people. Mission in Christ’s way means to be prophetic in society and to bring good news to the poor, the oppressed, the downtrodden and the forgotten.”⁸⁶

b. Ministry to the Youth

Once a holistic approach to mission is adopted, areas of concern in the society will emerge and these can be addressed. One such area of concern for the Naga society today is its youth. The youth are the future asset of any society. The Naga youth are the future of Naga society.

The ministry to the youth today cannot be left to anybody and everybody. It has become a highly specialized field. Hence, every Church has to train men and women for this ministry. The Baptist Church admits that it has neglected the youth when it says:

It is a glaring fact that they have been neglected or misguided. Neither the Church nor the Government has come up with a vital vision and plan to generate the potential of the Naga youth. Instead, one can see most youth falling under one of the following characteristics: “Inwardness” which leads to “anti-

authoritarianism,” “Fatherlessness” which leads to running away from existing structures and “convulsiveness,” leading to destruction and violence.⁸⁷

The Catholic Church is not far behind in its neglect of the youth. Often youth camps and sessions are organised to make them have fun and frolic for a few days. These elements may be important, but the youth also must be led and trained to face the more serious challenges and problems of life.

It seems clear that the Naga youth today do not take their orders from the Church and its leadership. The vast majority of them are a disillusioned lot and seek shelter in drug and alcohol abuse and violence. Hence, the Naga youth today poses one of the biggest challenges to the Naga Churches.

c. Ministry of Healing

The Naga society has gone through, one might say, traumatic experiences in the past four decades or so. It has lived through, and still lives through, an experience of prolonged insurgency movement which does not yet seem to see any light at the end of the tunnel. It is also experiencing factional fighting and ethnic conflicts. In this, many families have lost their loved ones and thus have deep wounds of hurt, anger and even hatred. These need to be healed and the Churches must address these issues with urgency.

d. A Naga Hermeneutics: Reading the Bible in the Naga Way

While the Bible is very popular and the first written book for many Nagas, the reading and the understanding of it has been largely literal or fundamentalistic. Therefore, it is important to point out that the Bible is the God-experience of the Hebrews and the Christ-experience of the early Christian community expressed in stories, images and categories of the people of that time. Thus, the people of God, either as Israel or as the Christian community, can be called “the womb within which the Word of God passes into Scriptures,” and as a “fruit of the womb of the people of God,

the Bible/Scriptures are also a cultural product: the work of a people imbued with a culture..., God's word incarnate (enfleshed) in cultures of peoples, Israel and the Greco-Romans."⁸⁸ If this is the process through which the Christian Bible was born, it must be made to be born anew in the Naga culture.

The 1993 document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, "Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," clearly recognizes that the "interpretation of a text is always dependent on the mentality and preoccupations of its readers."⁸⁹ There has always been an interaction between the Bible and culture.

This seems to be the fate of the Bible, to absorb, to fit into, to change, but, in the end, remain true to its past. It is penetrated by culture and is meta-culture, at the same time. To recognize this and reach to it properly, intelligently, is a fundamental necessity if one is to grasp the deepest reality of what the Bible is and how the Bible can best serve culture.⁹⁰

This process of interplay must take place between the Bible and Naga culture. In this way, what Pablo Richard says about interpreting the Bible in the context of the indigenous peoples of Latin America can apply to the Nagas as well:

The interpretation of the Bible in an indigenous context generates a hermeneutical process that is extremely challenging and creative. The indigenous community that reads the Bible begins to transform the biblical text, but at the same time the biblical text begins to transform the indigenous community. The community reads the text, and the text reads the community.⁹¹

C. H. Craft discovered to his pleasant surprise that "the traditional Nigerians often understood biblical events and teachings more clearly than I did, due to the fact that their culture is more similar to those of the Bible than is mine."⁹² The same can be said about the Nagas and their understanding of the Bible.

e. Need to build up Theological Vocabulary

One of the effective ways of nagaizing Christianity would be the building up of a Naga theological vocabulary. According to Ivan Illich,

mission is the opening of ever new languages toward the living God of revelation. Mission is the collaboration of the universal Church with a new people in the creation of a new language in which faith may find expression. Until “theos” could mean “Jahwe” there was no way in the Greek language to express the living God. Before “charis” meant a disposition of the God, the sending of His Son could not be understood in Greek. And perhaps, before St. Methodios translated the same word into Slavonic as “blagodate,” there could be no thought of Russian Spirituality.⁹³

Mission to the Nagas implies that the God of revelation is expressed in authentic Naga language. Until the *Jahwe* of the Hebrews and the *theos* of the Greek should become the Mao God, *Oramei*, who is described as *Ikhramei yi sokapio* (our creator), *ikhramei yi mono kapipei* (who gave us birth), *ikhramei yi chüku ilü kapipei* (our care taker). The second and the third attributes are feminine. All the attributes speak about a God who is for the good of human beings. In fact, *Oramei* means God for man. (*Ora*: God, *Mei*: Man). The nagaized Christian God of the Ao Nagas too should be known in terms of *Lungkitsungba*, (dispenser of life) *Lijaba* (world walker: one who walks on the earth, one who visits man from time to time) and *Meyutsung*, (Supreme Judge of all human beings).⁹⁴ Similarly, every Naga tribe should identify the titles and names of their traditional deities and use them for the attributes of the God whom they believe as Christians because these attributes will be more evocative and meaningful for them. Once again in the words of Ivan Illich, “mission is the transformation of signs (words, gestures) which traditionally meant worldly reality into reality representations of revealed meaning.”⁹⁵ Besides the titles/names given to God and his/her attributes, there are many theological realities and truths for which no appropriate words or expressions have been created in the Naga languages. Even simple gestures like bowing down or genuflecting are simply copied from others without identifying the Naga signs or gestures of reverence. Many Naga Christians also use words like church, sacrament, cross, etc., without bothering to create appropriate Naga expressions for the same.

Until these things are nagaized, Christianity will continue to remain strange or foreign to many Nagas.

CONCLUSION

Some of the new ways of being Naga Christians may not be new for other Churches in other parts of India but they are for the Nagas. Though the Nagas may have completed over one hundred years of Christianity, our own experience and that of many Nagas have indicated that Naga Christianity has still to go a long way before it can say that it has become truly Naga. In this regard, the remarks of M. M. Thomas may be appropriate. He says:

Naga Christianity has passed through a period, like many other Christianities, it identified Christianity with western culture. Now it has to affirm that Christ transcends all cultures, West or East, modern or tribal and that therefore, it can transform cultures and can take form in all cultures. Which means Christ can transform Naga culture and incarnate himself in Naga culture. It means that the Church of Christ can take a Naga cultural body. In this process, it can reform Naga culture in the light of Christ and Christian humanism and make its contribution to the renaissance of Naga culture itself.⁹⁶

We have mainly concentrated our discussions on how Christianity should be rooted in the Naga culture. Aspects of Naga culture that need to be transformed by Christ have not been dealt with at length. This could be the subject matter of another study. Our contention is that Christianity needs to be rooted in the Naga soil first. Only then can it genuinely transform it. The Nagas themselves will be the first to admit that their culture has limitations and dehumanizing elements. This needs to be redeemed by its encounter with the God-man, Christ. However, often these dehumanizing elements are usually not in the core of a genuine culture. They often occupy the periphery. Hence our contention is whether a genuine Naga culture will not be incompatible with an authentic Christian message.

We have not entered into the discussion about the various definitions of inculturation. What is important is the reality, and

we feel that the term we use, 'nagaization', expresses the reality of what we think inculturation should indicate for the Nagas. By this term, 'nagaization' we mean to indicate that the God the Nagas worship must be authentically their own, the Christ they experience must be their own, the Church they organize themselves in, must be their own, and, in a word, the version of Christianity they practise must be uniquely their own. While the biblical, historical, magisterial and theological foundations for inculturation make us stand on firm ground, we would like to indicate also that this step is necessary for the very survival of the Nagas as a distinct community of people.

Speaking about the neglect of Naga art and culture, Hokishe Sema has this to say: "The loss of interest in one's originality poses the greatest danger of moving towards the extinction of one's social life and even religious life."⁹⁷ Carlos Mesters, the Brazilian scripture scholar and theologian, says something similar about the South American Native Indians:

In a number of cases, Indians have been obliged to abandon their myths; stories of the Old and the life of Jesus have replaced them. The result of this approach is that a number of tribes have lost their identity and subsequently disappeared. The survivors, as isolated individuals, drift along without a corporate memory. They are alienated from themselves, their origins, and the land that was once theirs, but now no longer receives them.⁹⁸

It may be fitting to quote another theologian from Brazil who says that "the basic question is not how and to what extent cultures assimilate the gospel, but to what extent the gospel preserves the cultures from utter destruction. Paraphrasing Las Casas, we might say: better a live pagan culture than a dead evangelized one."⁹⁹ According to P. Puthanangady, "inculturation has become a basic requirement for the fulfilment of the mission of the Church. Her structures which are oriented to her mission, have, therefore, to be necessarily inculturated." He also says: "the structure should emerge, not so much from a concern for administrative efficiency as from a deep sense of mission."¹⁰⁰

ENDNOTES

1. Cf. K. D. Iralu, "Wither the Nagas in the 21st Century," *Nagaland Post*, 24, 25, 26 February, 1997. "At Crossroads: Nagas in Transition on the Threshold of 21st Century," *The North East Age*, 27 November, 1997, p. 9, are indications of the concern for a better future for the Nagas in the next millennium.
2. The celebrations took place from 27-30 November 1997 at Kohima, the capital town of Nagaland.
3. P. K. Sarpong, "Christianity should be africanized, not Africa christianized," *AFER*, vol. 17, no. 46, (1975) pp. 322-328.
4. J. Malula, "The Church at the Hour of Africanization," *AFER*, vol. 16, no. 4, (1974), p. 365.
5. Cf. P. Haokip, *Kuki Culture and the Christian Message: Theologising in the Context of Kuki Culture*, Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, 1979.
6. S. Sempore, "The Churches in Africa between Past and Future," *Concilium*, no. 106 (1977) pp. 1-11.
7. P. K. Sarpong, "Christianity should be africanized," art. cit., p. 322.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 325.
9. J. Malula, "The Church at the Hour of Africanization," art. cit., p. 366.
10. J. Hainz, "Koinonia," in H. Balz and G. Schneider, eds., *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2, Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1991, p. 303.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 304.
12. Hauck, "Koinon in the NT," in Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT)*, Vol. 3, Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Reprint 1984, p. 805.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 806-807.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 807-808.
15. Cf. V. Warnach, "Love," in J. B. Bauer, ed., *Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology*, vol. 2, Sheed and Ward, London, 1990, p. 527.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 528.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 529.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 529-530.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 530.
20. *Ibid.*
21. L. Aier, "The Naga Situation - an Analysis," *Nagaland Post*, 10 March 1997, p. 5.
22. K. D. Iralu, "Whither the Nagas," art. cit., p. 5.
23. N. Iralu, "Naga Political Movement vis-a-vis Nagas today," *Nagaland Post*, 10 March 1997, p. 5.
24. T. Khamniungan, "Misconception of Muivah," *Nagaland Post*, 26 February, 1997, p. 6.
25. Patricia Mukhim, "A Dormant Tribal Society Analysed," *The Shillong Times*, 2 September, 1995, p. 4.

26. P. J. Sankey, "The Church as Clan: Critical Reflections on African Ecclesiology," *International Review of Mission*, vol. LXXXIII, no. 330, (1995), pp. 437-449.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 439-440.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 440.
29. SAR, "Leading Hindu Magazine carries Pictures of Jesus," *The Herald*, June 26 - July 2, 1998, p. 3.
30. H. Küng, *Christianity: Its Essence and History*, SCM Press, Munich, 1994, p. 18.
31. Takatemjen, *Studies on Theology*, op. cit., pp. 24-25.
32. See chapter one, on Chieftainship.
33. Cf. R. J. Chreiter, ed., *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, Orbis Books, New York, 1991.
34. Cf. Takatemjen, *Studies on Theology*, op. cit., pp. 61, 72.
35. The full text of the story is given in Appendix V.
36. Cf. Takatemjen, *Studies on Theology*, op. cit., pp. 59-73.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
38. H. Sema, *Emergence of Nagaland*, op. cit., pp. 57-58; see also p. 186.
39. L. Neli, *Christianity and Experience of the Nagas*, op. cit., p. 6.
40. L. Meyase, Interview by author, Kohima, January 11, 1997.
41. In January 1998, during the Mao Catholic General Congress, (a bi-annual gathering) parts of the Mass were sung in the Mao Naga traditional tune. There was also a singing competition in which Christian themes were put in traditional lyric and tunes. It was well appreciated by all.
42. A. Msarikie. "The Sacraments are for People," *AFER*, vol. 20, no. 4, (1978), pp. 222-223.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 225-226.
44. S. Sempore, "The Churches in Africa," art. cit., p. 9.
45. *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, TPI, Bangalore, 1996, 1211.
46. S. Rayan, "Flesh of India's Flesh," *Jeevadhara*, vol. 6, no. 33, (1976), p. 260.
47. S. Sempore, "The Churches in Africa," art. cit., p. 9.
48. L. Neli, *Christianity and Experience of the Nagas*, op. cit., p. 26.
49. Cf. CCC 1210.
50. Cf. CCC 1211, 1212, 1421, 1534.
51. H. D'Souza, Interview by author, Tape recording, Shillong, September 23, 1997.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
53. *Ibid.*
54. L. Meyase, Interview by author, Kohima, January 11, 1997.
55. H. Sema, *Emergence of Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 58.
56. Takatemjen, *Studies on Theology*, op. cit., p. 21.
57. B. Kezo, Interview by author, Shillong, July 31, 1998.
58. Cf. A. Vanhoye, *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Subsidia Biblica 12, Pontificio Istituto Biblico, Rome, 1989, pp. 63-69, gives a detail treatment on the theme Christ's priesthood as mediation.

59. AA 2.
60. AA 3.
61. F. De Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, trans. and ed., by J. K. Ryan, Image Books, New York, 6th Printing, 1960, p. 29.
62. A study on the lyrics of these popular Gospel tunes may give an enriching aspect of Naga Christianity.
63. M. M. Thomas, *The Nagas towards A. D. 2000*, op. cit., p. 12.
64. L. Meyase, Interview by author, Kohima, January 11, 1997. The violation he spoke about is: a person observing a *genna* is not allowed to speak to strangers. But if a stranger, not knowing that the other was under *genna*, asks for directions, the person observing *genna* can speak to himself saying: "If I go this way, I would reach such and such place," thus he indirectly indicates the direction to the stranger.
65. V. Epao, *From Naga Animism*, op. cit., pp. 38-39.
66. CBCI, "Statement on Lay Participation," *Catholic India*, (Special). CBCI General Body Meeting, 13-21st February, Trivandrum, 1996, p. 28.
67. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici (CL)*, St. Paul Publications, Bombay, 1989, 3.
68. Cf. Angeline Mao, *Involvement of the Laity in the Evangelization of the Maram Naga Tribe*, Pontificia Universitas Urbaniana, Rome, 1991.
69. J. Mukala, Interview by author, Dimapur, June 1, 1998.
70. M. Keemattam, Interview by author, Dimapur, June 1, 1998.
71. Cf. Census of India, 1991: *India: Religion, Paper 1 of 1995*, pp. xiv-xxiii and Census of India, 1971: *India: Religion Paper 2 of 1972*, pp. 2-5 and Annexure.
72. J. H. Kane, *The Making of a Missionary*. Baker House, Grand Rapids, 1975, p. 1.
73. The total number of Catholics in Manipur, according to the Diocesan Directory, 1995, is 63, 357. Out of this about 50, 000 would be Nagas.
74. Cf. Directory 1995-96, Diocese of Kohima gives the total number of Catholics as 36, 941. Out of this, about 30,000 would be Nagas.
75. RM 33.
76. M. Zago, "Sri Lanka: New Evangelization", *Omnis Terra*, no. 290, (1998), pp. 280-281.
77. S. Van Calster, "New Evangelization": the Foundation of Human Promotion: Jesus Christ yesterday, today and always", *Omnis Terra*, no. 236, (1993), p. 137.
78. A more detailed list of qualities mentioned are given in Appendix III.
79. A more detailed list of qualities of ideal missionary is given in Appendix II.
80. A more detailed list is given in Appendix II.
81. Takatemjen, *Studies on Theology*, op. cit., pp. 138-139.
82. A. P. Aier, ed., *From Darkness to Light*, op. cit., p. 182.
83. Synod of Bishops, (1971), "Justice in the World: Convenientes ex universo," in A. Flannery, ed., *Vatican Collection 2*, p. 696.

84. EN 24.
85. RM 58.
86. J. Lutabigwa, "The Challenge of Mission in Christ's Way," *IRM*, vol. LXXVII, no. 308, (1988), pp. 524-526.
87. A. P. Aier, ed., *From Darkness to Light*. op. cit., p. 182.
88. P. Turkson, "Inculturation: a Biblical Perspective," in P. Turkson and F. Wijsen, eds., *Inculturation: Abide by the Otherness of Africa and Africans*, Society of African Mission, Kampen, 1994, p. 3.
89. PBC, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, NBCLC, Bangalore, 1994, p. 63.
90. J. J. Kilgallen, "The Christian Bible and Culture," *Studia Missionalia*, vol. 44, 1995, p. 67.
91. P. Richard, "Biblical Interpretation from the Perspective of Indigenous Cultures of Latin America (Mayas, Kunas, and Quechuas)," in M. G. Brett, ed., *Ethnicity and the Bible*, op. cit., p. 310.
92. C. H. Craft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, op. cit., p. xiv.
93. I. Illich, *The Church, Change and Development*. Herder & Herder, New York, 1970, p. 99.
94. Cf. O. Alem, *Tsungremology*. op. cit., pp. 45-77.
95. I. Illich, *The Church, Change*, op. cit., p. 103.
96. M. M. Thomas, *The Nagas towards A.D. 2000*, op. cit., p. 14.
97. H. Sema, *Emergence of Nagaland*, op. cit., p. 58.
98. C. Mesters, "Indian Myths and the two Testaments," *SEDOS Bulletin*, vol. 24, no. 8, (1992), p. 227.
99. L. Boff, *New Evangelization: Good News to the Poor*. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1991, p. 53.
100. P. Puthanangady, "The Structures of the Emerging Church of the Third Millennium", *Jeevadhara*, vol. 27, no. 161, (1997), pp. 185, 186.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The end of this work heralds the beginning of a task to be accomplished for the Naga Churches. It is the beginning of a task which we feel is our privilege to associate ourselves with and hopefully contribute our mite to its accomplishment. It is the beginning of a call to all the leaders of the Naga Churches to join in the venture. It depends on the effort of every Naga if it is to be fulfilled.

We began our study with the description and analysis of the traditional Naga society because it was this traditional society which responded to Christianity the way it did. Our study of the traditional Naga society might not have been exhaustive, but we have tried to present a complete picture of it. What we have found is that though scattered throughout the length and breadth of the entire North eastern region and parts of Myanmar, and composed of diverse tribes with distinct languages, the Nagas on the whole have a common history of origin and culture, and are united in the one nomenclature *Naga* in spite of its meaning and origin being still uncertain.

On the whole, the Naga society responded enthusiastically to Christianity. But it was not without some initial hesitation and difficulty. In fact, in many instances the Nagas were suspicious of the intentions of the pioneer missionaries. It was only after making sure that the missionaries were well-intentioned people and meant well that they decided to embrace Christianity. Besides, the Nagas did not become Christians overnight. The beginnings were slow and painful. Many of the first Naga Christians were persecuted and ostracised. Thus, it was a deliberative and free choice. Hence, the suspicion about their motive in embracing Christianity from many quarters is unfounded and untrue to the facts.

Looking back at Naga Christianity after a century and a quarter, one can say that it is the best thing that happened to the Nagas. This is borne out by the fact that in spite of the fierce

criticism by many Nagas of Christianity as it is practised today among them, not one has expressed regret for it. On the contrary, all those whom we have interviewed and questioned have expressed with thankfulness the gift of Christianity. The criticisms are not meant to point accusing fingers at the pioneer missionaries nor at Christianity itself. Rather, the criticisms were directed at the Nagas themselves for not having lived up to what Christianity stands for.

It is not totally fair to criticise the pioneer missionaries for destroying Naga culture. The yardsticks of today cannot be used to criticise the missionary methods or theology of yesterday. The missionaries then honestly preached what they believed to be Christianity. The mission theology of the time was hardly in a position to distinguish between the western garb and the message of Christ it enrobed. It was the same to those who preached and those to whom Christianity was preached. Speaking about the relationship between Naga Christianity and Naga culture, M. M. Thomas has this to say:

On the one hand, it preserved and developed the Naga languages and social structures and promoted Naga selfhood. On the other hand, Nagaland lost some of the symbols of its past, particularly its artifacts and fineries through mindless destruction in the simple belief that they belonged to paganism. In this process the people lost some valuable links with their past and Naga Christianity remained a potted western plant without roots in the indigenous soil of Nagaland.¹

This happened to many nations from the apostolic times. The Nagas too went through this process and they are still going through it. But, once again, in the words of M. M. Thomas,

the situation is changing with the church theologians and leaders realising that Christianity even in Biblical times transformed Jewish culture, the culture of the Jews of the Diaspora and the gentile cultures wherever it sojourned, and made them the vehicle of the gospel and of its human values. This story has continued throughout its history. It is quite a Biblical principle that “the glory and honour of the nations

(that is, of every people) will be brought into" the Church and the Kingdom.²

This shows that the Nagas now have a better understanding of Christianity and of their culture and traditions too. It is not a minus point for Christianity to be capable of being inculturated into Naga culture. In fact, it shows the richness and beauty of Christianity. Similarly, if Naga culture and traditions can incarnate Christ's message, it shows the universality of Christ's salvific power as M. M. Thomas expressly says:

... the art and culture of Nagaland attempts at perfecting thoughts and feelings through unique modes like dances, songs and other forms of human expression. Can Naga Christianity be indifferent to this living Naga stream? As a Christian theologian myself, I would say an emphatic 'No.'³

Western anthropologists and contemporaries of the pioneer missionaries were more insightful in this regard. Reference to two authors will corroborate this. J. H. Hutton, in a footnote to J. P. Mills' *The Ao Nagas* says:

It is difficult to see why the native taste for colour and brilliant effects which the Naga possesses should not be turned to the glory of God instead of being regarded as an offence before Him. If the bright clothes worn as a reward for the giving of the feasts of merit by the ancients, were retained by the Christians for their own acts of social service, if the insignia of renown in war were made badges of rank in the congregation, and deacons and/pastors encouraged to wear hornbill feathers and cowrie aprons to denote their office, while those assembling for divine worship were encouraged to do honour to the occasion by dressing in their best, if they were encouraged to adorn their church buildings with carvings as they have done their morungs, their artistic sense would be encouraged and possibly imbued with fresh vigour and the villages would not be deprived of the brilliant festivities which at present do so much where Christianity has not yet destroyed them, to brighten the dull monotony of village life.⁴

Fürer-Haimendorf was another author who saw similar possibilities. In his book *Return to the Naked Nagas*, he has this to say:

With a little trouble, an institution of an essentially social and economic character could have been remodelled so as to be compatible with Christian tenets. Were such adjustment impossible, Europe would have long lost all its folk-festivals and the Christmas tree would long ago have been condemned as a pagan symbol... Yet there seems to be no reason why the churches of the Aos should not be decorated with their own traditional wood-carvings; just as medieval craftsmen decorated Gothic cathedrals with fabulous animals, gargoyles and demons, so the expert wood carvers among the Aos might have been employed with advantage in building their homes for worship. In time new motifs could take the place of hornbills, monkeys and tigers, and a church containing the works of local artists would undoubtedly lie closer to the hearts of the community than one adorned with foreign colour prints... certainly the agricultural festivals could have been adapted to the new faith, given a new meaning and retained by the Christian community.⁵

Thus, what we are trying to propose for Naga Christianity is what European Christianity did centuries ago. The insights of these anthropologists indicate that a missionary among the Nagas needs to be also an anthropologist or should make use of the findings of sociologists and anthropologists. That is why our study of the Nagas as a missionary challenge has been presented along these lines.

M. M. Thomas gives another reason why the Nagas want to go back to the finer elements of their culture which have been neglected over the years. He says: "the longing for the past is indeed the search of a people for their roots, especially at a time when there is an awareness that uprootedness has produced demoralisation."⁶ This is becoming more evident among the younger generation of the Nagas. Being ignorant about their past, culture and traditions, they are in danger of losing their identity itself.

The critical attitude of the Nagas about their Christianity is to be seen in the light of what has been said above. If they are critical of their Christianity, it is because they have a better and deeper understanding of Christianity and that of their own culture too. They realise that there can be a harmonious relationship

between their culture and Christianity. It has not yet happened. Therefore, they are critical. They want to improve upon it and reform it, and they want to reform it because they love it. Hence, they dare to dream about better times ahead in spite of the enormous challenges and difficulties.

In response to these dreams and in the light of our own lived experience, we have attempted to propose some new ways of being Naga Christians in four areas: Naga Christology, Sacramentology, Spirituality and Ecclesiology. As Christianity is what it is because of the person of Christ, Christianity cannot be nagaized without making Christ a Naga. Hence, we have tried to make Christ a little more Naga by giving Him Naga titles and clothing Him with Naga signs and symbols. Having thus clothed Him in Naga signs and symbols, the Nagas will be able to worship Him in their own way - with their own songs, music and dance. They also will be able to honour, praise and thank Him in and through their various festivals. This relationship between Christ and the Nagas expressed in their own signs and symbols will be the Naga way to God, the Naga spirituality. Peace, unity and love in and through a nagaized Christ, which is lived out in tune with Naga traditions need to be organized and structured in visible symbols and models. This is Naga ecclesiology. The outstanding features of this Naga Church are: ecumenical sensitivity, missionary spirit, a participatory Church, etc.

It is now the turn of the Churches to respond to the dreams, aspirations and hopes of the majority of ordinary Naga men and women, young and old. The Churches have shaped the Naga society for over a hundred years and is in a position to shape it further and lead it to the next millennium “untill all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”(Eph 4: 13). This can happen only when Christ is really born among the Nagas, and becomes the *Alpha* and the *Omega* for them. For this is the reason why he came into the world in the first place, to be born again in every culture and people and a “true presence of Christ in a culture is redemptive and transforming.”

We began our study with a description and an analysis of the traditional Naga society. We then evaluated this traditional society's response to Christianity which was found to be unsatisfactory. Hence, we have proposed some new ways of being Naga Christians in the next millennium in the light of the dreams and challenges of the people. This approach, we feel should be the pattern for further study of Naga Christianity. The message of Christ should dialogue with the Naga experience in order to produce a Christianity that is deeply Naga and genuinely Christic. It is "this total immersion in the realities of our people... that will move us from being an "imported Church" to an "incarnated people of God."⁸ We have put down in words the hopes and aspirations of the Naga people as they journey into the new millennium. This is only the beginning. What remains to be realized is that these words of hope should sink into the soil of Naga culture and tradition and grow into maturity. This precisely is the challenge to every missionary among the Nagas, and every Naga is called upon to be an active and collaborative participant in this process. It is said that "the Christian faith has only a centre - Christ - but no boundaries. There can be endless ways to appropriate the mystery of Christ, and no one interpretation of what God has done in Christ can fully exhaust its unfathomable riches."⁹ We shall feel amply rewarded if we have initiated this process by our humble study.

ENDNOTES

1. M. M. Thomas, *Nagas towards A.D. 2000*, op. cit., pp. 13-14.
2. Ibid., p. 14.
3. Ibid., p. 13
4. J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, op. cit., p. 421.
5. C. V. Fürer-Haimendorf, *Return to the Naked Nagas*, op. cit., pp. 48-51.
6. M. M. Thomas, *The Nagas towards A. D. 2000*, op. cit., p. 9.
7. Dalila Nayap-pot, "A Maya Woman reflects upon Gospel and Culture," *IRM*, vol. LXXXIV, no. 334, (1995), p287.
8. A. Rogers, "The Church in Asia towards the 21st Century", *Sedos Bulletin*, no.4 (1994), p. 42.
9. S. W. Ariarajah, *Gospel and Culture: An Ongoing Discussion within Ecumenical Movement, Gospel and Cultures Pamphlet 1*. WCC Publications, Geneva, 1994, p. xi.

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APPENDIX I

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

In order to have a better picture about Naga Christianity, we also interviewed a number of pioneer missionaries among the Nagas and some prominent lay Christians, both men and women, Protestants and Catholics .

Though we did not have a fixed set of questions for all, the main area of our interviews were on the nature of Naga Christianity, past and present, and its prospects for the future. Given below are the names of people we interviewed.

Missionaries

1. Most Rev. Joseph Mittathany, D.D.

After many years of active and fruitful missionary work in the diocese of Tezpur, Assam, Rev. Joseph Mittathany was appointed as the second Bishop of Tezpur, succeeding Bishop Orestes Marengo SDB, in 1969. In a short period of time, he was able to make the diocese practically self-sufficient. In 1980, Bishop Mittathany was transferred to the newly erected diocese of Imphal, Manipur, as its first Bishop. Under his leadership, the diocese has grown and is growing steadily. The diocese was elevated as an Archdiocese in 1995 and Bishop Mittathany was appointed as its first Archbishop. He is also the chairman of the Regional Conference of Bishops. The majority of the Catholics in the Archdiocese are Nagas.

2. Most Rev. Tarcisius Resto Phanrang, SDB, DD.

Archbishop Resto, of the Archdiocese of Shillong (†1999), Meghalaya, was one of the pioneer Catholic missionaries among the Nagas, especially the Angamis. He worked in the Kohima Catholic Mission in the mid-sixties for about three years. Some of his insights into the Naga life and work have been very

instructive. Being a musician, his method of using the medium of music to preach the Gospel to the music loving Nagas worked wonders as quoted in our text.

3. The Rt. Rev. Abraham Alangimattathil, SDB, DD.

Bishop Abraham (†1997) was appointed Bishop of Kohima-Imphal in 1973 and looked after the two States of Manipur and Nagaland till 1980. When Imphal was bifurcated from Kohima-Imphal, Bishop Abraham continued to be Bishop of Kohima till his retirement due to ill health in 1996. Thus Bishop Abraham worked among the Nagas for almost a quarter of a century. He had a great love for the Nagas.

4. Rt. Rev. Jose Mukala, DD.

Bishop Jose Mukala was ordained a priest for the diocese of Kohima-Imphal in 1978. Since then, he has exercised his priestly ministry among the Nagas. He was appointed Bishop of the diocese of Kohima on 9 December 1997 and ordained a Bishop on 15 March 1998.

5. Rev. Fr. Peter Bianchi, SDB.

Fr. Peter Bianchi came to Manipur in 1956 and till today (except for a break of a few years) has been working among the Nagas (both in Manipur and Nagaland). He was the pioneer Catholic missionary among the Tangkhul, Mao and Maram Nagas. He has worked the longest among the Mao Nagas. Much of the present Catholicism among the Maos can be attributed to him. Though foreign missionaries are forbidden entry into Manipur, Fr. Bianchi continues to work there because he had acquired Indian citizenship.

6. Rev. Fr. John Med, SDB

Fr. John Med is a Czech by birth and an Indian by choice. After many years of being in the formation houses in South India, he came to be a missionary in the North East. Since then, he has worked among most of the different Naga tribes of both Nagaland and Manipur since 1970.

7. Rev. Fr. Scaria Nedumala, SDB

Fr. Scaria worked for ten years (from 1971-1982) as a missionary among the Mao Nagas. He used to make frequent and extensive tours of the Mao Maram areas (the then undivided St. Mary's Parish) and was much loved by the people.

8. Rev. Fr. Paul Bernick, SDB

Fr. Paul Bernick is also a Czech by birth and an Indian by choice. He came to the North East India mission after a stint of teaching in Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamallee, Chennai. He worked among the Angamis in the Kohima mission in the early sixties for about 3 years.

9. Rev. Fr. Matthew Tharakan, SDB

Fr. Matthew Tharakan has been working mostly among the Rongmei, Mao and Maram Nagas. He has worked among these Naga tribes for more than twenty years.

10. Rev. Fr. Michael Mundathanathu, SDB

Fr. Michael has been working mostly among the Lotha and Angami Nagas of Nagaland. His knowledge of the local languages, both Angami and Lotha, has made him to be one of the most loved and effective missionaries among the Nagas.

11. Rev. Fr. Joseph Kachiramattam

Fr. Joseph was the first diocesan priest to work in the then Diocese of Dibrugarh. He came to the Manipur mission in 1958 and spent the early years of his priestly ministry among the Kuki-Chin tribes of South and South West Manipur. For the second phase of his ministry, he was in Dimapur, Nagaland, among the different Naga tribes who form the Catholic community there. He worked among the Nagas for about five years. He is now the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Imphal.

12. Rev. Fr. Mathew Planthottam

Fr. Mathew was the second diocesan priest to work in the Manipur mission. He worked for 17 uninterrupted years among

the Tangkhul Nagas and mastered their language. At present, while looking after the training of Catechist, he also takes care a group of newly converted Rongmei Nagas living in the Imphal valley and is making more contact with these tribals of the valley.

13. Rev. Fr. Devasia Kollenkunnel, SDB

Fr. Devasia has worked mostly among the Lotha, Angami and the Mao Nagas of Nagaland and Manipur and mastered their languages because of which he has been very effective and loved by the people.

14. Rev. Fr. Joseph Puthenpurakal, SDB

Fr. Joseph worked in the Diocese of Kohima for 17 years as the Vicar General. He toured the diocese extensively and has an in-depth first hand knowledge of Naga life and culture. In fact, his doctoral thesis was on the Nagas, entitled *Baptist Missions in Nagaland*. He now teaches missiology at the Sacred Heart Theological College, Shillong and edits *Mission Today*, a journal devoted to mission and ecumenical research. He was, for five years, the director of a one year diploma course in theology for laity and religious.

15. Rev. Fr. Hector D'Souza, S. J.

Fr. Hector is the Regional Superior of the Kohima Region. He has lived and worked among the Nagas, especially among the Angamis and Chakhesangs from his scholastic days, identifying himself with the Nagas in every way possible. He knows the Angami language and has done his doctoral studies at Delhi University and his dissertation was on the Nagas entitled: "Aggression, Strategy for Survival: A Macro to Micro level Study of Nagas of North East India with special reference to the Angami Nagas".

16. Rev. Fr. Mani Parenkulangara

Fr. Mani was the third diocesan priest to the Manipur mission. Initially he did his pastoral ministry among the Tangkhul Nagas. The second phase of his ministry was among the Nagas of Tuensang District. He also worked at Dimapur and Jalukie, all

Naga inhabited areas. At present, he is working among the Zou Catholics of Sugnu area in Manipur. His simple and unassuming ways have won over many to the Church.

17. Rev. Fr. Mathew Keemattam

Fr. Mathew is one of the senior priests of the diocese of Kohima. He is the Vicar General of the Diocese.

18. Rev. Fr. Job Kallarackal, SDB

He worked among the Mao and Maram Nagas of Senapati district of Manipur for about three years.

19. Rev. Fr. Ckacko Karinthayil

He worked among the Konyak Nagas in Tobu, among the Changs in Tuensang and now runs a drug detoxication centre called 'Shalom' in Dimapur.

20. Rev. Fr. Devaraj Selvanathan

He worked among the Chang Nagas of Tuensang District and now is training young Nagas in Newman College, the Diocesan Minor Seminary, to be future missionaries among their own people.

21. Rev. Fr. Joseph Ngamkhuchung, SDB

He is the first Naga priest (both of Manipur and Nagaland). He has worked among the Rongmei Nagas of Manipur, among the Mao and Maram Nagas of Senapati Parish. At present, he is working among the Konyak Nagas in the Mon district of Nagaland.

22. Fr. Alex Vizo

He is one of the first Angami Naga priests and is the Parish Priest of Chiephobozou.

23. Rev. Fr. Graviour Augustine

He is a young priest, ordained in 1995. But his first appointment was among the Konyak Nagas in Tobu.

24. Fr. Dominic Lumon, the first Naga diocesan priest of Manipur

25. Fr. John Kashiiprii, the first Mao Naga priest**26. Fr. Koutsu Neisalhou Carolus, the first Angami priest of Nagaland**

I have been fortunate to have met many of the local Naga priests and religious, of Manipur and Nagaland. They have shared with me many insights about the Naga life, culture and vision for a new and better future for Naga Christianity. They are : Frs. Linus Neli, William Nepuni, and Srs. Teresa Shimra, Rosa Awon, Lucy Akhui and Aloysia.

Lay Naga Leaders: Men and Women

27. Mr. Hokishe Sema is a political leader, a former Chief Minister of Nagaland and former Governor of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. He is also author of a book on the Nagas *Emergence of Nagaland: Socio-Economic and Political Transformation and the Future*. He generously presented me a copy of the book which has been a great source-book for my work. I am extremely grateful to him for the same.

28. Mr. B. Kezo is the Inspector General of Police (IGP) in Shillong. He belongs to Chakrii, a group of Chakhesang Naga tribe.

29. Mr. Ashühe Mao is a Botanist, working in the Botanical Survey of India, at Shillong.

30. Mrs. Kekerüngu-ü Kire, a Rtd Govt. Servant.

31. Mr. Francis Ngajokpa, an officer in a NGO.

32. A. S. Moses, R. P. O (Caritas India).

33. Karaiba Joseph, a College Student.

34. A. Lobe, Teacher.

35. A. Ashuli, Teacher.

36. H. Dihe, College Lecturer.

37. Mr. I. Temsu, Rtd. Director of Tourism Dept. Govt. of Nagaland.

38. Mr. Joseph Odyuo, Accounts Officer, Nagaland Board of Secondary Education (NBSE).

39. Dr. Lichamo Yanthan, Medical Doctor, Naga Hospital, Kohima.

40. Mrs. Sobounuo Helena Belho, Professor.

41. Mr. Thepfukietuo Charles, Family Man.

42. Mr. Imkonglemba, Joint Director, Rural Development, Kohima.

43. Mr. Keviselie Silas Sekhose, Ex-Catechist.

44. Ms. Marina Rokoneinuo, Teacher.

45. Ms. Angela Banuo, Teacher.

46. Mr. Lukose Meyase, Officer in Education Dept., Govt. of Nagaland.

47. Mr. David Yanthan, Ex-Catechist

48. Mr. John Hingba, School Headmaster.

49. Mr. Simon Kent, S. B. I., Tsemenyu.

50. Mr. Peter Mao, Govt. Servant.

51. Mr. A. S. James, Catechist.

52. Mr. K. S. John Francis, Headmaster.

53. Mr. David Mahung, School Principal.

54. Mr. Vincent, Rtd., Pastor and Catechist.

55. Mr. Angelus Chihanpam Sareo, Teacher.

56. Mr. Michael C. Nabin, Teacher.

57. Mr. Philip Siluiwung Zimik, Rtd. Catechist.

58. Mr. N. Salew, Baptist Pastor.

59. Mr. S. Asiho, Rtd. Executive Engineer

60. Dr. S. D. Nandi, Principal of Oriental College, Kohima.

APPENDIX II

QUESTIONNAIRE ONE: GENERAL

ANALYSIS

Since our topic included knowledge of the present state of Naga Christianity, we wanted to find out from the people themselves what they think and feel about Naga Christianity today. This questionnaire is aimed at achieving this goal.

Through this questionnaire we tried to reach out to people of different ages, walks of life, profession and outlook. They included politicians, professors, students, Government servants, etc. People of different Christian denominations as well as of the different Naga tribes were asked to respond to this questionnaire.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE PRESENT STATE OF NAGA CHRISTIANITY

This questionnaire was divided into five parts. Part one was for information on personal bio-data, part two was on first contact with Christianity (Qs 1-7), part three on Christian faith and Naga culture - an assessment (Qs 8-18), part four: on attitude towards missionaries (Qs 19-20), and the last part was on suggestions for deepening Naga Christian faith (Q 21). The questionnaire was sent out in June 1996, to 60 people and of these 40 replied (ca 66%).

PART I: General Personal Bio-data

Name

Age and Sex

Address

Occupation

Qualification

Religion/Denomination

PART II: First Contact with Christianity

Q. 1. At what age did you become a Christian?

25 out of 40: Christian by birth

15 out of 40: Converts

Q. 2. If you were not Christian by birth, who were converted first in your family?

Only 28 out of 40 answered this question. Of this, 10 said: the whole family was converted at the same time, 9 respondents were the first to be converted, 5 answered that their brothers and sisters were converted first, and 4 that parents were the first to be converted.

Q. 3. How did you come into contact with Christianity?

This question was answered by 32 of the respondents. Out of this 13 came into contact with Christianity through missionaries, 10 through parents and relatives, and 9 through friends.

Significantly those who came to know Christianity through missionaries are more.

Q. 4. What attracted you most to Christianity?

No set pattern of answers was given to be ticked by the respondents. This was done on purpose so that they may be able to reflect on their personal experience and answer accordingly. Answers given were varied. Below we give some of the leading reasons:

- salvation in Jesus Christ
- salvation and civilization
- hope of seeing God face to face after death
- dedicated lives of the missionaries
- Christian love
- Church services and activities
- the lesson of forgiveness
- harmonious singing, attractive prayer services and

- disciplined life
- oneness in Christ and spiritual experience
- close association with missionaries
- Eucharistic celebrations
- new life in Christ,
- personal destiny
- forgiveness and reconciliation
- brotherhood/sisterhood in Christ
- Christian simplicity and purity of heart
- Christian charity to the poor and needy
- teaching of Christ on love and simplicity

Many analysts of Naga Christianity today think that the Nagas embraced Christianity mainly on grounds of educational, developmental and economic gains. However, the list above does not contain any hint of that.

Q. 5. What were the greatest obstacles in your becoming a Christian?

- having to stick to rules and regulations
- being the only Christian in the family
- economic problem (not having a proper dress to go to Church)
- to have personal encounter with God
- to give up drinking rice-beer
- to give up traditional beliefs
- community pressure
- thoughts of backsliding
- non-Christian parents
- giving up old habits and starting a new life
- misunderstanding and disturbance from non-Catholics
- excommunication from society

Q. 6. What helped you most to overcome the difficulties?

- prayer and dedication
- faith in God
- contact with Christian friends and neighbours
- maturity and knowledge about Christian doctrines

- Bible reading
- hope of a brighter future
- faith in Christ
- encouragement from religious teachers

For the majority of the respondents, perseverance in prayer was the most helpful means of overcoming the obstacles they faced in their Christian life.

Q. 7. How did you feel when you first came to the Church?

- joy in the heart, happy, good, touched
- impressed by the ceremony/rituals/ sermons
- blurred, vague, nervous, puzzled feeling
- wondering who is God, where is He
- newness of self, proud of myself, pride in my heart

PART III: Christian Faith and Naga Culture

Q. 8. How do you feel now as a Christian?

- feeling of confidence, joy and hope
- feeling of not being up to the mark
- happy to find the real Saviour
- feeling of being better than not being a Christian
- contentment
- enjoying Christian faith and Naga culture
- confident of salvation
- proud of being a Christian
- life is meaningful and worth living
- hope of eternal life
- know who I am, where I go
- I am what I am because of Jesus
- feeling scrupulous
- feel more responsible for others, society (I am my brother's keeper)
- feeling wise, privileged, satisfied, comforting, lucky to be a Catholic, happy to be a follower of Christ, happy to have

chosen the right religion, joy in the warmth of Christian fellowship, feeling as a member of God's family

- on the right track
- experience of forgiveness

Q. 9. Have you any reason to regret becoming a Christian?

All the respondents answered this question and said that they have no regrets at all in becoming Christians. The only regret they expressed was that they were/are not able to put into practice the teachings of Christianity to the full. Another regret they expressed was that Christianity came late to the Nagas.

Q. 10. Do you think you have lost something good in your culture by becoming a Christian?

Out of 40, 24 respondents have no regrets at all. The answer of the others were with some qualifications. We give below the main ones.

Three said that many good things were lost; for instance, the real sense of Naga identity. Three others said that Naga culture and Christianity are complementary.

Others felt that the roots of Naga traditions were destroyed. For example, the feeling of closeness which was there among the Nagas before Christianity seems to be vanishing.

This response seems a little strange given the fact that before the advent of Christianity, many Nagas were engaged in inter-village feuds, head-hunting, etc. For many, Christianity was, in fact, the unifying factor among the Nagas.

Q. 11. If you are a convert, do you think life was better before than now? Why?

Except for one respondent who answered, "Difficult to say", all the others (97.5 %) said: Life is better now than before.

Q. 12. What benefits do you get after becoming a Christian?

The various answers to this question can be grouped under five headings: socio-economic, religious, education, modernization and psychological/emotional satisfaction. The ratings are as follows: Religious benefits get the highest rating, followed by educational benefits. The third benefit is socio-economic, followed by modernization; psychological/ emotional benefits the lowest rating.

Here too the contention of many that most Nagas became Christians for mere socio-economic and educational benefits is proved to be not in line with the facts.

Q. 13. What do you think of the Naga Christians today?

The answers to this question are very varied but revealing. We shall give the leading ideas below:

- Christianity: Well established in the Naga society
- many Nagas: Good Christians, loving people, faithful to God
- Naga Church: growing steadily
- Christianized but not really converted
- Christians in name only, skin deep, seasonal Christians
social Christianity, as a fashion, as a hobby
- money minded, materialistic Christians, too Westernized
- need to grow spiritually, to repent, to forgive, and to have a deeper life of faith
- Christianity: a failure in Nagaland, deplorable, dogmatic, fanatic
- Bible: misused (used only for apologetic purposes)
- lack of conviction
- not understanding what Christianity really is
- No one - pastors, priests, missionaries - doing their duty well

Q.14. Do you think Naga society has changed for the better or worse with the influence of Christianity?

In answer to this question, 75 % of the respondents said that Naga society has become better because of Christianity, while

25% are of the opinion that it has become worse. Given below are some of the reasons for both.

- a)- all round improvement of life
 - has given modern education
 - has opened a wider horizon for the Nagas
 - has made life more beautiful and meaningful
 - better in every aspect: morally, socially, culturally
- b)- moral life of Nagas worse than when they were pagans
 - cultural values like honesty, hard work, etc., are lost
 - influence of Christianity is only superficial.

Q. 15. What kind of Naga society do you foresee in the future with the on-going impact of Christianity on the Nagas?

The shape of the future of Naga society was expressed in 31 possible ways. Out of these, 10 were positive, 16 were negative, 4 were conditional, one non-committal.

Q. 16. What, according to you, are the essential features of being a Naga Christian?

- be truly a Naga and Christian
- practise what you believe
- avoid materialistic values and adhere to true Naga values
- avoid falsehood, stick to the truth
- freedom of religion
- fraternity, simplicity, broadmindedness, honesty, hospitality, peace loving, just, God-fearing, compassionate, forgiving, service-minded, sympathetic, optimistic, sense of humour
- give up the Western culture

Q. 17. If you are a convert, do you still observe the traditional beliefs like rituals, *gennas*, etc. ?

Three out of 40, that is, 7.5. % say that they still observe the traditional beliefs; 20 out of 40, 50 % do not observe them any more.

The rest, that is, 42.5 %, did not give a clear cut answer. Some say that they still observe some of the rituals which are good and not connected with superstitions but they never compromised with Christian beliefs by doing that. Others say that they do not observe the rituals but join the festivals and celebrations. Some are confused about certain practices, whether to observe them or not.

The situation described last may be typical of many Naga Christians. They are not clear about the relationship between culture and the Gospel. Hence a clear teaching on the relations between culture and Christianity is a must.

Q. 18. Do you live your Christian faith with conviction?

Thirty-six (36 out of 40= 90 %) of the respondents say that they are convinced about their Christian faith. Only one (2.5. %) is not convinced and three others (7.5 %) are not sure about it.

Q. 19. According to you, who is an ideal missionary?

This question was meant to elicit their own ideas of an ideal missionary or their ideas about the qualities of a missionary. The answers were many and varied. We list the leading ideas below:

- simple and honest, simple life-style, dedicated, devoted
- able to adjust to all the circumstances of life
- able to shoulder the spiritual problems of people
- one who identifies himself with the people
- has a deep spiritual life, man of prayer
- knows the way, goes the way and shows the way
- impartial, approachable, controls his temper
- understands and respects people
- discourages tribalism
- a friend, guide and helper to people
- lives a chaste life
- tolerant and patient, broadminded
- not corrupt nor money-minded
- practises what he preaches

- leads a good moral life

The stress in the list is on normal human qualities. People expect missionaries to be first and foremost human beings. It is the experience of many missionaries that the people are more tolerant of the missionaries than the missionaries are of the people. People will forgive the missionaries many other faults, if they are genuine human beings.

Q. 20. What are the things you do not like to see in a missionary?

- money-mindedness
- easy going, half hearted dedication, hypocrite, haughty
- not learning Naga languages
- more friendliness with the rich and powerful, favouritism
- not living a deep spiritual life, living a worldly life, luxurious life
- boasting, superiority complex, partiality, racist, self-centred
- always confined to institutions
- looking for cheap popularity
- attachment to particular families or tribes
- indifference to the poor and needy
- despising the ignorance of the people

In this list too, the emphasis seems to be on what at times, seems to be too ordinary for missionaries. Another element is that people, however simple and ignorant they may be, expect to be respected by the missionaries.

PART V: SUGGESTIONS

Q. 21. Kindly suggest some ways and means through which Naga Christians may be able to deepen their Christian faith and identity.

The response to this question was overwhelmingly encouraging. The Nagas are concerned about the future of their

Christian life. They want to deepen it, to improve upon it. Given below are some of the important suggestions:

- discover the root causes of problems
- every denomination should stress on faith formation
- put a moratorium on killings, hatred, corruption, etc.
- desire to deepen faith should come from the heart
- promote more local vocations to the priesthood/religious life
- Naga Christianity in the context of Naga culture
- Christian living based on the NT
- proper understanding of the Word of God
- inculturated Naga liturgy/worship and sacraments
- Naga Bible hermeneutics
- strong ecumenical spirit
- work towards unity among the Nagas

We have tried to incorporate some of these suggestions in our work. Some of these are vital for a better Naga Christianity for the new millennium.

APPENDIX III

QUESTIONNAIRE TWO: TO THE YOUTH

Analysis

Questionnaire one was mainly on the present state of Naga Christianity and it was directed to a cross section of the Naga society.

We prepared another questionnaire with the purpose of focussing the attention on the future shape of Naga Christianity in the new millennium. In this we thought that the Naga youth of today, who will be leaders of tomorrow, would be the best suited to respond. Hence, this questionnaire was targeted to them.

The questionnaire was sent to a hundred Naga undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate and research students. Out of hundred, 60 students responded to our questionnaire. The composition of those who responded were as follows:

| | | |
|-------------------|----|----------|
| Undergraduates | 6 | = 10 % |
| Graduates | 15 | = 25 % |
| Postgraduates | 34 | = 56.6 % |
| Research Students | 5 | = 8.3 % |
| Denomination: | | |
| Baptists: | 37 | = 61.6 % |
| Catholics: | 21 | = 35 % |
| Others: | 2 | = 3.3 % |

The questionnaire has three parts: Part 1 (Qs 1-3) is on general information about the respondent; part 2 (Qs 4- 8), on whether the respondents are satisfied with the quality of Naga Christianity; and part 3 (Qs 9-15), on Naga Christianity for the third millennium.

QUESTIONNAIRE

PARTICULAR QUESTIONS

PART 1

Q. 1. Name & Surname.....Sex: M/F

Q. 2. Student Status:

Undergraduate/graduate/postgraduate/Research student

Q. 3. Tribe:

Religion: Baptist/Catholic/Others

PART 2

Q. 4. Are you satisfied with Naga Christianity/your church today?

| | | |
|-----------|----|--------|
| Yes: | 3 | 5 % |
| No: | 50 | 83.3 % |
| Somewhat: | 5 | 8.3 % |
| Not sure: | 2 | 3.3. % |

Q. 5. If yes, give 3 reasons (according to importance)

The leading reasons given were the following:

- Christianity has led us
- from darkness to light
- old traditions replaced by excellent Christian traditions
- some barriers in social and economic life are broken
- has contributed to unity, education for all, love, peace, harmony

Incidentally, ' from darkness to light' was the theme chosen for the celebration of 125 years of Christianity in Nagaland.

Q. 6. If no, give three reasons (according to importance).

Some of the reason given were:

- 99 % Naga Christians are only nominal Christians
- leaders are power hungry
- conflicts in the church, church connected with politics
- present day missionaries are not like the pioneers
- dichotomy between faith and life
- very little of Christian values, more of pagan values
- shallow knowledge of Scripture
- too much materialism
- religious - too fond of wealth and luxury
- number of local vocations insufficient

These ideas were also found among the respondents of our first questionnaire.

Q. 7. If your answer is positive, suggest 3 ways to improve it.

The important suggestions given were:

- be authentic Christians
- improve patterns of ministry
- produce Christ-like leaders
- deeper knowledge of the Bible
- more local 'missionaries'. Here missionary is used to mean any person devoted to Church related service, including priests and religious.
- co-ordination and mutual understanding among different churches (denominations)
- encourage and train the youth to serve the church
- freedom from worship of 'mammon'.

Q. 8. If your answer is in the negative, suggest 3 ways to remedy it.

The leading suggestions included:

- self-sacrificing service
- strong ecumenical spirit

- leadership that is selfless, visionary, dedicated, confident
- people oriented church, open to changes
- spiritual formation of the laity
- improve prayer life
- present Gospel in tribal context
- include study of Bible in the school curriculum
- preach more about forgiveness
- stress quality more than quantity
- personal union with Christ
- openness and freedom to speak and think

Q. 9. What are the challenges facing Naga Christianity / your Church for the next century? Name them in order of priority.

- danger of materialism
- survival of Christianity itself
- challenge of tribalism (ethnic conflicts)
- challenge of ecumenism
- leadership crisis
- challenge to peace and unity
- healing the wounds of injustice
- tribal based theology (contextual theology)
- challenge of forgiveness and reconciliation
- influence of media
- challenge of scientific progress
- challenge of inculturation
- drug abuse and alcoholism
- challenge of 'Nagaland for Christ'.

The future of Naga Christianity as well as society will largely depend on how these challenges are met with. We have attempted to address some of these concerns in the main body of our work. The youth have been quite remarkably articulate about the areas of concern for Naga Churches.

Q. 10. Is there anything you would like your Church to change?

1. Patterns of ministry
2. Ways of worship

3. Others (Specify)

Those who were for a change in the pattern of ministry were 27 out of 60 (=45 %), and those who think ways of worship should be changed were also 27. Only one respondent said that there is no need of any change while five were for change in areas other than ministry and worship. These areas were:

- change high-handed policies
- stress teaching on doctrines (Christian)
- more lay participation in church affairs is needed
- special treatment of rich and powerful should be avoided
- permanent diaconate (for men and women) be introduced

Q. 11. What, according to you, are the qualities missionaries to the Nagas and also Naga priests/religious/pastors/leaders should have?

Given below are the qualities looked for in a missionary to the Nagas listed in the order of priority:

1. Two firsts: Humility and Impartiality
2. Two seconds: Faith in God and Exemplary life
3. Two thirds: Sincerity and Dedication
4. Two fourths: Man of prayer and Adaptability
5. Two fifths: Efficiency and a Spirit of self sacrifice
6. Practising what one preaches
7. Loving, understanding
8. Identification with the people
9. Truthful, honest
10. Sociable

The qualities listed very clearly indicate that what people like to see in missionaries are not so much men of great deeds but men who are somebody, something. The emphasis is on being, not doing. In the list, the only quality that implies activity is 'efficiency', the rest are qualities of being.

The stress on humility is significant. Missionaries are not to boast over people. It is a life of humble service in the manner of the Master who said: 'I came to serve and not to be served.'

Q. 12. List the qualities of an ideal Naga Christian.

The qualities envisaged for an ideal Naga Christian are similar to those of the missionaries. Here too, we list five important qualities in the order of priority:

1. To be loving
2. To have strong faith in God
3. To be humble
4. To be honest
5. To be God-fearing

Here also, like in the previous one, the emphasis is on being.

Q. 13. Should Naga Christianity/Churches be truly in harmony with authentic Naga culture? (yes/no).

Yes : 40 out of 60 (= 66.6 %)

No : 17 out of 60 (= 28.3 %)

No comment: 3 out of 60 (= 5 %)

Out of 17 of those who said 'No', 15 were Baptists, one Catholic and one of another Christian denomination. It is shown in other places too that the Baptists are a little less inclined to inculturation than the Catholics. It is also said that the Catholics have learned from the mistakes of the Baptists to be more inclined to inculturate.

Q. 14. Describe in a few words the Church of your dream (your ideal Church) for the third millennium.

The Church of their dream envisaged by the youth who responded to our questionnaire has the following features:

- a Church that brings about unity between God and men, and among men
- that which fosters peace and harmony
- concerned for the extension of values of God's Kingdom
- a Church of indigenous clergy
- Centre of all life (like the sun to the planets)

- where there is no distinction of class and status
- a Church that serves (servant Church)
- less institutional, more animational Church
- the conscience of society
- a Church like that of the Acts (of one heart and one mind)
- a more ecumenical Church

Q. 15. Suggest some ways how the youth can contribute towards a better Naga Christianity for the new century.

- active participation in the affairs of the church
- animation programmes for the youth
- guidance (for life, career, etc.)
- make them know Jesus personally/experientially
- respect for elders
- copy the best of the West (not the worst like drug abuse)
- make them pursue excellence in all aspects of life
- let them be concerned and interested about Naga society
- let them cultivate sincerity and honesty
- encourage youth thinkers and writers
- identify their talents and channelize them
- train them to be service-minded, to be peace-makers

In the present context of many Naga youth falling prey to drug abuse and other evils, it seems vital that the voice of the youth is heard and that they are given an active role to play in the transformation of the Naga society and Church.

APPENDIX IV

MAO NAGA GENNA DAYS¹

In the Mao Naga Calendar, there are seventeen 'mani' or obligation or *genna* days in a year. These days of obligations are observed monthly according to the seasons of the year. The days of the *genna* are announced by the headman of the village on the previous night or in the early morning of the day of observance. All have to abstain from work that day. The days of obligation are as follows:

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Oramani | - a day to remember God. |
| Phehrümani | - a day for purification of all men. |
| Omi Kazhü | - a day of prayer to God imploring him not cause accidental fire. |
| Pforeshü mani | - a day of prayer against greediness. |
| Tokho | - a day of prayer for food. |
| Dzükho | - a day of prayer for water. |
| Okheshü | - a day of prayer against destruction by pests. |
| Osüra | - a day of prayer for the growth of millet. |
| Ojü Kathi | - a day of prayer to make the soil fertile. |
| Ochü Kozü | - a day of prayer against darkness. |
| Molu kosü | - a day of prayer against earthquakes. |
| Mopra kohro mani | - a day of prayer for the growth of the crops. |
| Pirü Mani | - a day of prayer against hail storms. |
| Khrio kashü | - a day of prayer against a very strong wind. |
| Osü pukakha | - a day of rest after sowing the seed of millet. |
| Chulu kashü | - a day of prayer for a good weather (This is observed only after hail storms). |
| Kathizho | - this obligation day is observed only if any person dies during the festivals of <i>Saleni</i> and <i>Chuthuni</i> . (festivals of plantation and harvest respectively) |

These days of *genna* or obligation are seen from the angle of the sanctification of the seasons/months of the year.

APPENDIX V

THE AO NAGA STORY OF LIJABA AND TWO SISTERS²

Once upon a time, there lived two orphan sisters in a certain Ao village. When the mother died, their father married again. Their stepmother hated the two sisters greatly and so managed to drive them out of the house, with the consent of their father. After roaming about for many days in the jungle, the two sisters reached a certain village. It was a small village and they lived in a small hut, on the outskirts of the village. As far as the villagers were concerned they were outsiders because they were living outside the village.

One day Lijaba, the creator of the world and the God of the fields and vegetation, appeared in that village. Lijaba used to visit a village every year in order to bless them. But he used to appear in disguise. This time he appeared as a beggar. He came knocking at every door asking for a night's rest, but everybody rejected him because he was poor and unattractive. He said, "May I come into your house for lodging?". One said, "Our pig has given birth to some piglets and therefore I cannot take you in". Another said, "Our chickens have hatched out and so I cannot take you in." Others gave various other reasons for not letting him in. At last Lijaba reached the little house on the outskirts of the village and said, "May I come in to stay with you tonight?" The two sisters replied, "We have nothing to offer you at home and so we are ashamed to welcome you.". Lijaba responded, "Your grandfather has everything you want. Don't worry, I will come and sup with you tonight".

The two sisters welcomed him and that night, when it was time for supper, Lijaba sat near the oven and began to cook. He took out a grain of rice from his head and put it into the pot and the pot was filled with cooked rice. Likewise he scratched on his legs and put something into the pot and soon the pot was filled

with well-cooked pork. After the meal, the three of them sat on the *sunglang* (the back platform of the house). And Lijaba, pointing to the fields of the villagers began to ask the sisters, "Whose field is that"? And whose is that?" At last he pointed to a little field and asked, "Whose field is that?" The field belonged to the two sisters, but the elder sister was not willing to say that it was theirs because it was too small. The field was the smallest of all the fields in the village. It was so small that it could be covered with a *likho* (a mat used for drying rice, about 3 sq.ft). The young one wanted to tell Lijaba whose field it was. So she let the comb of her elder sister fall on the ground. While the elder sister bent down to pick up her comb, the young sister pointed to the field and told *Lijaba* that it was theirs. On hearing this, Lijaba blessed the field of the sisters and cursed those of others. And he said, "Harvest it, fill the house with paddy, and when you have collected enough of it, cut the ear of the basket." Later on when the villagers saw what had happened, they realized that it was Lijaba who had visited them that day. But it was too late.

ENDNOTES

1. N. Ashuli, *The Mao Nagas*, op. cit., p. 21
2. Takatemjen, *Studies on Theology*, op. cit., pp. 61-73. See also J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, op. cit., p. 220; and W. C. Smith, *The Ao Naga Tribes*, op. cit., p. 80.

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Sr. Angeline Lotsüro, daughter of (late) Mr. Heshuo and Mrs. Oniro of Pudunamei village, hails from the Mao Naga tribe. She is a member of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians (MSMHC). She did her Master's Degree in Missiology at the Pontifical Urban University, Rome, in 1991, and her Doctorate in Missiology at St. Peter's Pontifical Institute, Bangalore in 1998.

Naga Christianity has so far failed to bear fruit in the social, cultural and economic life of the Nagas, thus showing that it was not a lived spirituality. It is high time that the Naga Christians search for a deeper understanding of Christianity and that of their own culture and tradition in order to effect a harmonious blending of the two. In view of this goal, Dr. Angeline has done a valuable and sincere investigation of the present Naga Christianity in order to uncover a genuine, renewed and deeper faith for the Naga Christian society of the third millennium. I recommend this book to all the Nagas. They will certainly be enriched by it.

Dr. Hokishe Sema, Sematilla, Dimapur, Nagaland

Dr. Angeline Lotsüro's book presents lucidly the missionary challenge of making Christianity relevant to the Nagas. The 'Nagaization' of Christianity that the author presents in the book is indeed a contribution to contemporary missiologists and pastors who are searching for tools to assist the Nagas in their journey towards the third millennium. You will definitely profit by reading this book.

Dr. Jeyaseelan, Chancellor, Archdiocese of Imphal, Manipur

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