THE BATTICOTTA SEMINARY

BY

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(AN UNABRIDGED DRAFT)

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THE BATTICOTTA SEMINARY

(By James T. Rutnam)

The Batticotta Seminary of the American Ceylon Mission in Jaffna was established on 22nd July 1823. According to J.V.Chelliah, author of "A Century of English Education", and a pioneer historian of this institution, " it was variously called Central School, Academy, College and Seminary". As for the site of the institution, it was originally decided upon to establish the "College" in the town of Jaffna. Three days later, it is reported, the Mission had voted that the "Academy" should be temporarily situated at Batticotta. This decision too appears to have been changed and an attempt was made to buy a house in Jaffna town belonging to Mr. Mooyart, a grandson of a former "Hoofd Administrateur" of Jaffna, for 1500 Rix dollars as the permanent establishment of the institution . This also was abandoned, and Batticotta was decided upon eventually. The name of the institution was officially declared in 1827 as the American Mission Seminary.

But the name that has survived in history is Batticotta Seminary. Batticotta is an unfamiliar English ~~term~~ for what we all know today as Vaddukoddai, a little township at the far western end of the Jaffna peninsula. The Portuguese, Dutch, and early British and other European and American settlers pronounced and spelt Vaddukoddai as Batticotta with slight variations. Often Batticotta has been confused with Batticoloa, the sea-board capital of the Eastern Province of Ceylon.

According to ~~de Queroz~~ de Queiroz, the Portuguese historian, during the Portuguese times the Jesuit Mission had built a church dedicated to Our Lady of Assumption at "Batecota". This church still stands, modified and repaired during the course of centuries, and hallowed by the association of generations of Christians of different denominations.

Baldeaus, the Dutch writer who produced his book in 1672, refers to this church, then serving the needs of the Dutch Reformed Christians, as being situated at "Batecotte". A beautiful picture of this "Kerch" and "Kerch Huys" appears in Baldaeus' book. According to an inscription in Dutch found on the church it would appear, as J.P.Lewis states in his book on "Tombstones and Monuments", that the church was "repaired" by the Dutch in 1678 during the administration of Jaffna by Laurens Pyl.

For the present purpose it would be sufficient for us to note that the Seminary that was established at Vaddukoddai in 1823 had from its very inception been integrated with this old established place of worship and was ministered by, as we shall discover, by some of the most benevolent, learned, energetic, and dedicated men who had ever come from the West to the East.

The first of the remarkable men who came from America to Ceylon was Samuel Newell who landed at Galle, at 1813, during the course of the "War of 1812" that was waged between the USA and Great Britain following the Napoleonic conflict in Europe. Newell who reached Calcutta with the first batch of American Missionaries in 1812 was forced to quit the place by the East India Company. He had proceeded to Mauritius where he lost his wife and then turned back to make another attempt to land in India, after stopping in Ceylon which he knew was governed by the Crown and not by the East India Company.

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Rev. S. W. Howland in his "History of the American Mission" that appeared in the "Ceylon Friend" in 1891 does not confirm the story that Newell on his way to India was wafted to the shores of Ceylon by accident. Whatever it be Newell received a sympathetic welcome in Ceylon, despite the political tensions, from Governor Robert Brownrigg and Chief Justice Alexander Johnston.

Johnston who had lived with his father Samuel Johnston in Madras, Trichnopoly and Madura since 1781 was a keen student of oriental culture. Indeed he could speak Tamil and Telugu fluently. At this time both Brownrigg and Johnston were concerned about the failure of Dutch Christianising efforts in Jaffna, a situation that was highlighted by Claudius Buchanan's report after his visits to Ceylon in 1806 and 1808.

Newell was therefore sent to Jaffna to study the position on the spot. Newell lost no time in reporting from Jaffna, as stated by Howland, to his Board in Massachusetts as follows: "Here, there is every facility for spreading the gospel among the pagans. The Governor is desirous that they should be instructed and would encourage every attempt of this nature. The people have no particular objection to the Christian religion, and will not molest Missionaries, and the Government will protect them. Perhaps no portion of the heathen world possesses so may advantages for spreading the Gospel".

There was also another reason for selecting Jaffna. The East India Company as we have seen, despite the efforts of Grant, Wilberforce and others in England, was not disposed to allow the free entry of Missionaries to India, although this attitude came to be softened later. In these circumstances it is probable that Brownrigg, Johnston, Newell and others had sought a way for stepping on the continent of India from a point of vantage in the peninsula of Jaffna. This explains the remarks made by Howland that "one prominent reason for selecting Jaffna as a field of operations was its strategic position as the key to India, its inhabitants speaking the same language as many millions of Southern India. This idea of entering India by way of Jaffna was carried into effect in 1834", as it will be observed later, "when the Madura Mission was begun by Missionaries, Catechists, and teachers from Jaffna".

The Board in Massachusetts known as the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, which was described by Emerson Tennent as "one of the most remarkable associations for the dissemination of Christianity that has existed since the time of the Reformation", responded meaningfully to this invitation, and sent a team of high-souled and devoted persons to this country.

The "War of 1812" was over with the signing of the Treaty of Ghent in December 1814. The Missionaries left Massachusetts the following year on the 13th October and arrived in Ceylon on the 22nd March 1816. The future first Principal, and indeed the Founder, of the Batticotta Seminary, Daniel Poor, was one of them. He came with his wife and was accompanied by Mr & Mrs James Richards, Mr. & Mrs. Benjamin Meigs, Mr & Mrs. Horatio Bardwell and Mr. Edward Warren. Of these the Bardwells went over to Bombay. The rest stayed on for a few months in Colombo helping other Christian Missions, and meantime learning Tamil under Gabriel Tissera, a son of Roman Catholic parents.

This young man, Gabriel Tissera, who was born on 1st August 1800, and who was therefore 16 years old at the time, was a son of Phillipu and Maria Tissera of Colombo. He came to be described later by Rev. P. Percival as an individual who was looked upon by his contemporaries as "one of three native Christians whom all believed to be good men and true", Another Tamil young man Franciscus Malleappa, a son of Tironandar Francis

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Nonis Malleappa, a Tamil Proponent under the Dutch, also joined Tissera in teaching Tamil to the Missionaries.

It is very likely that these young men were students of the "Native School" known as the Seminary at Hulftsdorp, an educational institution that replaced in 1804 Governor North's Schools at Wolvendhal conducted by Rev.J.H.C. Cordiner, Andrew Armour and Sergeant Thomas Supple for Sinhalese, Tamil and European boys. The Principal of the Hulftsdorp Seminary, who was befriended by the Missionaries, was the Hon. and Rev. T.J.Twisleton, later in 1818 to become the first Archdeacon of Colombo.

Tissera and Malleappa were evidently good teachers, for Poor, no mean scholar himself, was able to preach in Tamil within a year or so of his learning the language. Soon the two Tamil youths were ready to accompany Poor and his colleagues, as their interpreters, to Jaffna. Warren left first arriving at Jaffna, travelling in a palanquin, on 11th July 1816.

Brownrigg in a historic letter to Wilberforce dated 13th June 1816, a copy of which is in the Public Record Office London, covers these events as follows :-

> "When a foreign Missionary, an American came to the Island in 1813, his reception was such as to produce a letter of thanks from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, a copy of which I enclose. I will not enlarge on this subject, except merely to state that during the stay of that Missionary in Ceylon, I was placed in a very delicate situation, for I had reasons to apprehend that my protection of American Missionaries might involve me in some embarassment with the East India Company's Governments.
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> "The five American Missionaries announced in the Commissioners' letter are arived, and I have just acceded to their request of establishing themselves in Jaffna, the Northern Province of this Island".

For a time Poor and his friends stayed on in Jaffna where they lived on the most cordial terms with fellow Missionaries of other denominations. On 15th October 1816 Warren and Poor took up residence in Tellipalai. Malleappa too went there. Richards and Meigs were given charge of Vaddukoddai which they occupied on 7th March 1817. Tissera was attached to this centre. Two pupils of Rev. Christian David, a native of Tanjore sent by the Ceylon Government as early as 1800 as Superintendent of the schools in the peninsula, were also taken into the fold, Nicholas Peramandar to serve at Tellipalai and the other, Matthew Philips, who later became father-in-law to Rev. John Hensman, to serve at Vaddukoddai.

Conditions prevailing at this time are best described by Chelliah. "When the first Missionaries came to Jaffna", he relates, "there were only a few Tamil schools here and there and only a few could read, and write with the style on ola, but very few could read the printed character with ease and fluency. The Missionaries, therefore, strove to raise up a reading population by establishing free vernacular schools in different villages. But they found that the desire of the people for education was so small, and their prejudice against missionary work so great, that it was a difficult task at first to induce parents to send their children to these schools. The teachers were, to begin with, necessarily Hindus, and it was difficult to procure even these. The first free schools were established at Tellippalai and Mallagam with 30 boys. These were taught to read and write the Tamil language and

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had instruction in small works of Tamil poetry and Arithmetic and Geography on the European plan. They had, in addition, instruction in Scripture. Some of the pupils, who had studied under Rev.Mr. Palm, an L.M.S.Missionary, who had worked at Tellippalai before the advent of the Americans, were given assistance in the study of English".

"The Missionaries", we are told, "were not satisfied with the meagre education given in these free schools, and were anxious to attempt a more thorough system of training by keeping promising pupils entirely under their influence". They decided to start Free Boarding Schools, the first Free Boarding Schools, it is believed, in Asia. The children were slow in coming. Six small boys formed the first batch at Tellippalai. Another school was started at the other centre at Vaddukoddai. With the extension of Missions at Uduvil, Pandateruppu and Manipay, Boarding Schools, ~~too,~~ for both sexes were established at these places. "The pupils", Chelliah states, "were boarded and clothed free, and their expenses were paid by individuals and associations in America. Names designated by the benefactors were given to the pupils". Instruction at these Boarding schools was given in English and Tamil. The subjects included Scripture, Arithmetic, Grammar and Geography.

Proselytizing in the sense we now understand - a sinister opprobrious term that describes a misguided religious zeal - was never practised by the American Mission. There were no forcible conversations. The Missionaries depended entirely on precept and example to gain their spiritual objectives. They set great store on education, on discussion and finally on conviction and a genuine change of heart for which consummation they were ready to pray and wait patiently. This explains why there was not a single case of baptism of a non-Christian in their field for as long as five years.

Nathaniel Niles formerly known as Kathiresar, a son of Velayuthar of Punnalaikaduwan and Jordan Lodge were the first Hindus who were baptised by the American Mission, and this happened as late as 22nd April 1821. It would thus be seen that the Missionaries laid their emphasis on education and that too of a wide and liberal type. Nathaniel Niles who later became a Preacher was a remarkable product of local American education, as the references to his educational progress published in the Missionary Register, a ~~London~~ Missionary publication of the time, would indicate.

With the rapid expansion of Missionary activity, particularly in the field of education, additional personnel was needed. Early in 1820 Levi Spaulding, Miron Winslow, Henry Woodward and John Scudder arrived in Ceylon with their wives. Brownrigg was still Governor of Ceylon, but as it transpired later, the Missionaries had not come a day too soon. Howland states, "They arrived just as the Governor Sir Robert Brownrigg was retiring from office. His official consent to their residence was given the day before he left. When the Lieut-Governor Sir Edward Barnes protested, he said he was Governor as long as he remained in the Island and he should give permission. Sir Edward Barnes replied, 'Very well, they will soon die off and we shall not allow any more to come'."

The canard that the Ceylon Government had relegated the American Missionaries to the "arid" North (of Ceylon) to perish there appears to have sprung up from this story. Indeed it should now be clear that Jaffna was selected for other reasons. "It is a curious fact", "says a writer to the Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon", that from the announcement of this programme (by Barnes) till its withdrawal in 1832 (by Horton) the American Mission lost only one man by death and suffered

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little from sickness. Two members of this company lived and worked fifty years in Jaffna". The "curse" had no effect !

But Barnes did have his revenge. For after Brownrigg's departure in 1820 when Barnes sat on the gadi for a time, James Garret came over to Ceylon to take charge of the Mission's printing press. Barnes would not allow him to stay, and he had to leave eventually for Bombay. Barnes, a Waterloo veteran, fumed that he considered it " an impertinence on the part of Americans to come to Ceylon for Missionary work since every needed effort in that direction was already being made by His Majesty's Government".

Barnes sneered at the Americans and got his Deputy Secretary William Granville to write to the Missionaries in a letter dated 22nd September 1820 that "when he considers the vast extensive regions of the American continent,many of the populous tribes of which are to this hour in all the darkness of heathen barbarism, he cannot but think that your pious labours might be far more advantageously exerted in their cause than in that of a people already subsisting under a Christian Government".

He even dared to reopen the question of the other Missionaries permitted by Brownrigg to stay on, and his despatch to Lord Bathurst, the Secretary of State, dated 10th October 1820 affords interesting reading. He did not think it "expedient or prudent to allow the subjects of a foreign State to gain that influence over the minds of the Natives, which as their religious instructors,these men and their successors might in time acquire". !

Barnes, whose objections were really political and not religious, continued to be a menace to the Mission and a nightmare to unhappy Poor. It must however be recorded that towards the end of Barnes' administration in Ceylon,he seems to have been affected by Poor's persistent protests, for in his letter dated 11th March 1829 to George Murray on Ecclesiastical Establishment and Education he says :

> " At stations within a short distance of each other and a few miles of the Town of Jaffna are five American Missionaries with their Native Assistants. They are very well informed, indefatigable and painstaking men, have had much success among the Malabars, and have very flourishing schools with an Institution at Batticotta for the further education of the most promising Youth who have made considerable progress in the higher branches of Education. Their annual Examinations have always given the greatest satisfaction to all present; among whom have been some of the best judges in the Island".

Righteousness seems to have triumphed finally,though belatedly. Note the word "indefatigable" used by Barnes. That was the measure of Poor's triumph over his enemies.

(3) With the addition of capable and earnest men and women (thanks to Brownrigg), Meigs and Poor felt emboldened to extend and raise the educational services of the Mission. Chelliah says, "Some of the boys were so far advanced in their studies, that it was felt that fuller provision should be made for their further education. With this object in view the Missionaries resolved to establish a central institution to give higher education to deserving boys, and issued an elaborate Prospectus, which they presented to the Prudential Committee of the American Board, the Ceylon Government,and to friends in England, America and the East".

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The position on the eve of the establishment of the Seminary is given in an early Report of the Mission. " In 1822", it is stated, "there were 42 schools with 1800 pupils maintained at a cost of £.270/- including presents, premiums and the wages of the teachers who, instead of receiving a regular salary, as at present, were paid according to the progress of the scholars which was determined by a monthly examination".

In 1823 the Mission supported more than 105 boys and 28 girls at the free boarding schools at their five stations. "Not a few of the pupils in these schools", continues the Report, "had made such advancements in their studies and given such promise of further advancement as to warrant an attempt to place within their reach the advantages of higher education in a Central High School".

The proposal of the Missionaries was to establish a College of University rank with, it is supposed, a Charter to confer degrees in due course. The Prospectus which was dated Jaffna, Ceylon, March 4, 1823 and signed by Meigs, Poor, Winslow, Spaulding, Woodward and Scudder is a historic document. It is an extremely far-sighted and comprehensive blue-print for a truly liberal education of "Tamul and other Youth". The prospectus was reproduced in the Missionary Register. A slightly incomplete version is given by Chelliah in his book.

It is a thousand pities that this magnificient Plan was not fully implemented. Had it been executed in the grand manner as envisaged by its architects it would have heralded a national and cultural renaissance not only in Jaffna but throughout Ceylon and South India. It was noted in the Plan that "there was a considerably large Tamil population in the Island, and some millions on the continent, that might need the side of a literary Seminary, and that there were many native youth of good talent who would prize its privileges and employ them for the good of their countrymen". What vision ! What ideals ! What enlightened patriotism !

It will be observed that the builders spoke of good "talent" not of good "birth". This, we suppose, was done advisedly, and is very significant; for although it so happened that the recruitment of students by the American Mission was drawn generally, with a few exceptions, from a particular class of the Hindu community (unlike, for instance, the Catholic Missionaries who cast their net far and wide), the method of education imparted and, as we know in several instances, the manner in which the social crises and challenges of feudal pseudo-superiority were faced, testify to the determined effort on the part of the Missionaries to instil what they held to be the cardinal Christian virtues of universal brotherhood among the brethren with whom they had cast their lot.

Their method of approach to the social problem of caste was somewhat peculiar. They preferred generally to inculcate a sense of duty and social justice among those who had hitherto wrongly held themselves superior, rather than to encourage a consciousness of denied rights to those who had been forced till then to accept a position of inferiority. Thus they endeavoured to avoid the bitterness of the class struggle. Admittedly this was not the radical way. But it did raise the social tone of the community. The least that it did was to make indifferent Hindus better Hindus, even if they had failed to make them Christians, good or bad.

The objects of the proposed College were declared in the Prospectus. The first object was :

> " to give native youth of good promise a thorough knowledge of the English language. The great reason for this is, that it will open to them the treasures of European science and literature, and bring fully

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before the mind the evidence of Christianity. A knowledge of the English language, especially for those designed for Native Preachers, is in this point of view, important almost beyond belief. Their minds cannot be so thoroughly enlightened by any other means".

Tennent had stated some years later, "The Seminary like all others founded by the Mission is essentially a Christian institution". The Missionaries were of the opinion that a knowledge of English was necessary for a liberal education; and that a liberal education was necessary for the reception of the Christian gospel.

The Missionaries disagreed with the position taken up by William Carey and his colleagues in India who had earlier in 1817 established an educational institution known as Serampore College, a body somewhat similar to, though much less catholic and liberal than, the one contemplated in Jaffna. The controversy between the two was over the place of English in the educational structure.

The question of the national language vis-a-vis English has been the subject of debate ever since the British undertook the educational development of their subjects in India. This debate still continues even after the withdrawal of the British. Scientifically it has been held that one must learn first in one's own mother tongue. This has never been refuted by the Missionaries. But they had realised that English education at that time was an urgent need in order to open the windows of the world to their promising wards who were hungering after knowledge, more knowledge, and still more knowledge. The prospectus in a spirited advocacy of the stand of the Missionaries had declared :

" The great efforts they are making to transfer the learning of the West into the language of the East, is a matter of most sincere rejoicing; and the Seminary here contemplated is designed to assist in doing this good work. It is in this way only that the great mass of the people can be enlightened. The most important works in English must be translated, epitomes made of them, or new works written; but to accomplish all, or any of these objects, a large number of English scholars must be raised up from among the Natives. It is a work which foreigners, comparatively ignorant of the language and customs of the country, cannot be supposed qualified to do".

The Missionaries had anticipated Macaulay's Minute by a long stretch of years.

The second object declared in the Prospectus was " the cultivation of Tamul literature " This is how it was described :

" To maintain any good degree of respect among the native inhabitants, it is necessary to understand their literature. The Tamul language like the Sanskrit, Hebrew, Greek, &c. is an original and perfect language, and is in itself highly worthy of cultivation. The high or poetic Tamul is, however, very difficult of acquisition, and requires all the aids which the college is designed to furnish. The Puranas, and all the more common sacred books, are to be found translated into high Tamul, in which they are read in the temples; and it is particularly desirable that some

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at least, if not all of those who are set for the defence, or employed in the propagation of the Gospel, should be able to read and understand them".

It further stated :

" a more important benefit would be the cultivation of Tamil composition, which is now almost entirely neglected. It is common to find among Tamul people men who can read correctly, who understand to some extent the poetic language, and who are able perhaps to form a kind of artificial verse, who cannot write a single page of correct prose".

It continued :

" the attention of many must be turned to writing intelligibly, and forcibly, in their own language. Original native composition, on account of the superior felicity of its style and idiom, will be read when the production of a foreigner, or a translation, will be thrown aside. To raise up, therefore, and qualify a class of native authors whose minds being enriched by science may be capable not only of embodying European ideas, but of putting them into a handsome native dress, must be rendering important aid to the interests of learning and Christianity".

As will be seen the Missionaries held firm to the view that the "interests of learning and Christianity" were not contradictory; thus their ultimate objective was not overlooked.

It was also planned to give a select number of the pupils a course of study in Sanskrit, Hebrew, Latin and Greek. These were generally intended for students proposing to be "native preachers".

The prospectus stated :

" In addition to these languages, and through the medium principally of the English, it is designed to teach, as far as the circumstances of the country require, the sciences usually studied in the colleges of Europe and America. The course at present contemplated will embrace, more or less extensively, Geography, Chronology, History (civil and ecclesiastical), Elements of Geometry, Mathematics, Trigonometry, Natural Philosophy, of the Mind, and Natural and Revealed Religion. In teaching these it is designed to provide as fast as possible elementary works in Tamul, for the assistance of the student. The public lectures will be delivered principally in English with suitable explanations in the Native language. That all the students will be able to make great advances in most of ~~these~~ their different branches, is not supposed, but many will thereby obtain an expansion of mind, and power of receiving and originating thought, which will not only free them from the shackles of superstition but enable them to guide others also is not only hoped but confidently believed".

There were other benefits too contemplated by the architects of this institution. They stated :

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" Agriculture and mechanic arts will be improved; learning will rise in estimation and gradually obtain a dominion over wealth and caste; the native character will be raised; and the native mind, freed from the shackles of custom, will imbibe that spirit of improvement which has so long distinguished and blessed most European countries. A College such as this is intended to be, would give a new tone to the whole system of education in this District, and exert an influence which would be felt in every school and village".

" In short", Chelliah wrote, "the founders had in view not only the raising up of competent Preachers and Mission Agents, but also well educated citizens, Christian and non-Christian, who would serve government and society in the work of the uplift of the Country".

This Plan was thought by some to be "rather large", but according to an early Report of the Mission it was "warmly approved by the friends of the Mission in America and generally also in India. Funds to a considerable amount were conditionally pledged in America, and would have been given, had not unexpected obstacles from the local Government prevented its projectors from carrying the Plan fully into effect".

What were these obstacles ? The Ceylon Government under Barnes would not allow the work to be carried out as proposed. It was expressly stated, says Miss Helen I. Root in her book "A Century in Ceylon" published in 1916, that no more Missionaries could join the force and no "College" could be established.

Poor was undeterred. Within four months of the issue of the Prospectus, Poor and his colleagues presented everybody with a fait accompli. The University (so it was, despite the fact that it had no Charter) was begun, although at its birth it was wrapt in swaddling clothes. There were no buildings to speak of. Funds had to be collected. Even the final sanction of the Board had to come. But the Professors were there. The students were there too. Together, these pioneers formed the University, the first of its kind in Ceylon, and the second in Asia, the other being Serampore College in India.

Let others contend, Poor would have told himself, for the name, we shall have the substance. For the name of the institution remained unresolved for a number of years. Even the siting of the institution at Jaffna, the metropolis of the peninsula, so desirable from many points of view, was abandoned from a fear of the organisers being thought of as being too ambitious.

But Poor continued to press his claims for due recognition of the institution by the local Government under Barnes. He sought assistance from such friends as the Archdeacon Twisleton. He also sought the aid of the Board in America to make a direct approach to the British Government. This too was done, but to little avail. A College such as the one proposed "had to be under instructors from Great Britain". That was the furthest concession that could be wrung from unwilling hands. This proposal was however politely ignored by Poor.

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The term "Seminary" which was finally used to describe this institution was an innocuous word that could mean different things to different men. A Mrs. Edema had a school which she called a "Seminary" in the Fort of Colombo. There is a reference to it in the Ceylon Government Gazette of 7th February 1818. In the issue of the Gazette of 29th May the following year, a Mr. Taylor speaks of his "Seminary" at Main Street, Pettah. These were of course primary or post-primary schools. The Government Seminary at Hulftsdorp was no better. It was at the most a secondary school.

The Missionaries appear to have toyed with the word "Academy" too, originally a word to mean the garden near Athens where Plato taught. At the end, they agreed, modestly, upon the word Seminary for their University College. In this manner the Missionaries sidetracked Government disapproval of the word "College" and all that that word connoted in the context of a University.

The twenty-second day of July 1823 is a day for ever memorable in the annals of the educational history of this country. This is how the event and circumstances are described in an early Report of the Mission: "The institution was commenced in a modified form at Batticotta in 1823 by bringing together the most forward lads from the different Boarding Schools and placing them under the care of one of the Missionaries, who with assistant teachers, was to devote himself principally to their instruction in literature, science and religion. The number at first received was forty-eight, who, after qualifying themselves by further attention to some elementary subjects, entered upon a course of study both in English and Tamil, similar to that laid down in the original plan of the College".

Poor had achieved his purpose, although perhaps in a guarded and disguised way. He had succeeded in giving effect to his original plan despite all the objections and obstacles he had encountered. Poor had been the obvious choice for the post of Principal which place of honour and responsibility the Mission had unreservedly awarded to him.

Poor had as his chief assistant a "Tutor in English and Tamil", Gabriel Tissera, the boy from Colombo, now a young man of twenty-three. Tissera evidently had decided to remain in Jaffna. He was admitted to the congregation of the American Mission on 10th October 1819, and was a licensed as a Preacher from 5th November 1821. The records in Jaffna show that his widowed mother had joined him in Jaffna.

Tissera is given a very prominent place by the American Missionaries in their accounts of these times. For instance, Dr. Fred Goodsell for long a Vice-President of the Board gives more than a page to Tissera in his book "They Lived their Faith", which was published by the Mission some years ago. It is reported by His Lordship the Bishop in Jaffna, Sabapathy Kulendran, that the manuscripts of an unpublished work by Goodsell on the "History of the Ceylon Mission" running into nearly two hundred pages contain an account of Tissera. Goodsell's "history" is said to begin with Gabriel Tissera and the first seven pages of the book are reported to be entirely devoted to him.

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Tissera had a big hand in laying the foundations of the Seminary. There is a copy of Samuel Johnson's Dictionary with a present member of Tissera's family that is autographed "From Archdeacon Twisleton to Mr.Gabriel Tissera, 1823". Evidently this was a gift from Twisleton to the young "Tutor in English" at the Seminary. The records show that from 1823 to 1831 Tissera was attached to the Seminary. He was renowned Preacher until his early death on 9th February 1838. His letters to American friends are reported to have been published in America.

Tissera married a daughter of Simon Jurgen Ondaatjie. He left two sons, G.S.Arianayagam aged 7, and G.P.Savundaranayagam aged 5 at the time of his death. They became wards of the missionary, Peter Percival. Ariyanayagam rose to be a High Court Judge in Travancore. Savundaranayagam had a leading practice in the Madras High Court. He successfully defended Arumuga Navalar in the cases filed in India by some of Navalar's opponents and by the "Deekshitars" of Chidambaram in the 1870's. In a biography of Sri la Sri Arumuga Navalar by V.Mutukumaraswamy, Savundaranayagam is reported to have shown "great mettle" in these cases.

The band of American Missionaries present at the opening of the Seminary was small. Besides Poor there were Meigs, Winslow, Spaulding, Woodward and Scudder. Warren and Richards were victims of tuberculosis contracted before they arrived in Jaffna. Warren was sent back for a sea voyage and he died at the Cape of Good Hope on 11th August 1818. Richards was one of the six earnest students of Williams College, Massachusetts, who launched the idea of this Mission in 1810 from a haystack in Williamstown, and who joined in establishing the American Board on 29th June that year. He was the only one among this lot of six pioneers to embark personally for the foreign field. Soon he left his mortal remains at Tellipalai where he died in 1822.

Strangely enough the patients, Warren and Richards, were the first medical missionaries, although Scudder was not too far behind. Warren and Richards had a short course of medical study at the University of Pennsylvania and some practice at the hospitals at home. Within a year of their arrival in Jaffna they had opened up, with the help "of government officials and private individuals", a temporary hospital at Tellipalai for the cure of both soul and body, which function, they had felt, was their mission in life.

Poor of course was most concerned with soul and mind. Poor too had been afflicted by tuberculosis, but some kind fate seems to have saved him for his historic mission at the Seminary. Poor is reported to have had at the beginning the professional assistance of Winslow, later to be the great Tamil lexicographer; Woodward, who remained in Jaffna until 1834; and Scudder, who was a practising doctor of medicine in New York when, according to him, the "call" came to leave the surgery at once, to work as a Missionary in the foreign field.

Scudder had belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church, but soon after he arrived in Jaffna, he was ordained in 1821 as a Minister of the Gospel of the American Mission by the laying of hands not only of his ordained colleagues, but also of those of Rev. Chater, a Baptist Missionary, and Rev. Robert a Wesleyan Missionary. This was a foretaste of the oecumenical spirit now strongly established in Jaffna.

Scudder of course was the founder of the first Mission-endowed Medical Dispensary at Pandateruppu, and later of the world-renowned medical services in South India at Madura, where even to-day the name of Scudder is held with reverence and gratitude. Winslow's name is associated with that of his wife Harriet (great, great, grandmother of John Foster Dulles) as the founders of almost a parallel institution to the Seminary for higher education for Tamil girls at Uduvil in Jaffna. Harriet

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Winslow died in 1833. Her memoir published by her husband gives an interesting account of the early years of the Misssion.

With regard to the curriculum and system of education at the Seminary at its commencement Chelliah states, "It is interesting to note the introduction of a system of mutual instruction with the help of monitors, by which it was hoped to stimulate idle and inattentive students in their studies. There were two distinct courses of study: English and Tamil. Forty-eight boys 'of good caste and promise' were admitted the first year after passing a satisfactory admission examination in English and Tamil. The examination consisted of Reading, Spelling, Translation from the English Testament into Tamil, the first principles of Grammar, and the ground rules of Arithmetic. In Tamil, the examination was on Negundoo.

The students were divided according to their proficiency into two classes. To the end of 1824 these perfected their knowledge of English Grammer, Arithmetic, Translation, Reading, and Writing. Tamil poetry, Nannool and Negundoo were systematically studied. Besides these, regular instruction was given in Scripture. The number of scholars at the close of the year was reduced to 36 in consequence of some having been taken to fill situations in the Mission, and others having been, for various reasons, dismissed. The next year, advanced work was taken up in the subjects mentioned above, and the higher class took, in addition, Elements of Geography and Astronomy".

The reference to "good caste" in the above description is unfortunate, for there was no social discrimination at the Seminary. The students who came to the Seminary from the Boarding Schools were recruited, as it was observed earlier, for some reason or other, from a particular section of the Hindu community, a section which called itself as belonging to a "good caste", having entrenched itself in the feudal hierarchy, through long years of social climbing and social tyranny, as exclusively entitled to privileges and functions which is denied to others.

The Missionaries had to contend with society as it was. They confronted it and often challenged it with a view to changing the social order on the basis of a sense of universal brotherhood; but their approach towards this end was, as described earlier, not violent or radical. They had a way of their own.

The course of study at the Seminary at the beginning extended for six years. Tennent who was closely acquainted with the Seminary says in his Christianity in Ceylon that the "course of education is so comprehensive as to extend over a period of eight years of study". The course he was referring to perhaps included a post-graduate course. Tennent describes the curriculum as "embracing all the ordinary branches of historical and classical learning, and all the other higher departments of mathematical and physical science combined with the most intimate familiarization with the great principles and evidences of the Christian Religion".

"The students", Tennent states, "reside uninterruptedly under the same roof with their instructors; and although no renunciation of idolatry and no formal declaration of Christian belief is insisted on as a preliminary to admission, still each inmate is required, as a matter of discipline, to be present at the morning and evening devotions of the school and to attend to Christian worship in the chapel of the College.

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"To participate in the religious observance of the Hindus", Tennent continues, "is regarded in the student as a disciplinal offence; and so far from the regulation being looked upon as a despotic interference with religious freedom,it is regarded by the students as only a well-understood condition of their admission to a Christian institute,and one which they voluntarily comply in order to secure a participation in all the advantages of the College".

It should be noted that no renunciation of one's own religion was demanded or insisted upon; but a willingness to live in a wholly Christian environment (which fundamentally and morally could not be repugnant to any other religious environment) was insisted upon, and this demand could not be considered,even under modern standards and concepts of religious freedom,as asking too much of a child who voluntarily enters a Christian College with the approval of his parents. True, the child is bound to be influenced by his exemplars, but the undoubted liberal education imparted would have equally influenced the child to decide for himself the path he should take on leaving College. The Batticotta Seminary, for these reasons, has not only produced good Christians but also good Hindus, as the results have clearly shown.

J.H.Martyn in his "Notes on Jaffna" states, "The expenses of the Seminary were defrayed by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions,which is also called the Foreign Missionary Society of the American Congregational Churches. Most of the pupils were supported by patrons in the United States after whom they were called and who made specific yearly donations of not less than twenty dollars for their beneficiaries".

Tennent too says that "it is part of the system to apply the annual contribution of some one friend of the Mission if it amount to the stipulated sum (which was £.4/3/0 per annum) to the exclusive education of one individual who, on admission, assumes, in addition to his own name,that of the distant benefactor to whom he is indebted for his presentation". This is the genesis of the abundance of American names in such a far-away place as Jaffna. Most of the names came from Maine, Massachusetts,Connecticut and Maryland.

Many friends from Ceylon and India had contributed funds for this Seminary. Although Governor Barnes had frowned on the idea Sir Richard Ottley,a Puisne Judge and later Chief Justice of Ceylon,held quite opposite views on the matter. Ottley contributed a substantial amount, and had justified the honour done him by Poor who named the chief building in the Seminary as Ottley Hall. This Hall continues to bear Ottley's name, and is now part of Jaffna College. Mr. Mooyart, a grandson of a Dutch Governor,the Missionaries Carey and Marshman of Serampore College and the Hindu religious and social reformer, Raja Ram Mohan Roy were among the subscribers.

Within a period of nine years over £.1,300/- was collected from individuals for the Seminary. This was spent on the buildings. Chelliah reports that the support of the students, the wages of teachers, the salary of the Principal, the expense of books,apparatus etc. were all paid from mission funds. The sum so spent for the years 1830-1832 was over £.2,558/-. According to L.J.Gratiaen, author of the book on The Founding of Mission Schools the expense of the Institution at the time, including the Principal's salary,amounted to £.650/-per year.

"The first building put up", says Chelliah "were six good sized rooms for students,a dining room and kitchen,a large and airy room for meetings of various kinds,several apartments for devotional purposes,and study rooms for the Principal and the native Tutor. In addition to this a Hall was in process of erection to be used for public examinations,lectures and other exercises,and for the library and apparatus. It was designed to

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be two stories in height(sixty-four feet in length)the lower story to be used for public exercises,and the upper for holding classes,for the library,etc".

The library began with 600 Volumes and orders for classical books and science equipment to the value of £.150/- were forwarded to England. An annual examination was held during 1825 at which Ottley, Major Antil,Commandant Jaffnapatam, and several other gentlemen besides Missionaries were present. The judges were much impressed.

"At the beginning of 1826", Chelliah writes, "twenty lads from the Preparatory school were added to the Seminary having passed a good examination in the required studies.By the addition of this class the number in the three classes of the Seminary rose to 53, but was reduced to 48 at the end of the year. At a public examination in the Tamil Language in June of that year essays were produced, among others, on the following subjects: Form and dimensions of the earth;Number, distance,and size of the planets; Eclipses; Method of finding latitude at sea; and Fixed stars. Some of these subjects were illustrated by the help of instruments and coloured maps and drawings,much to the astonishment of the people assembled.

"The annual examination took place in September,and it was again attended by Sir Richard Ottley and other high Government Officials,besides missionaries. The highest class was examined in Algebra and the Elements of Astronomy,while the other two were examined in the subjects mentioned above. Sir Richard was highly gratified with the performance of the students, and afterwards in a letter to the Principals said that his first impression was considerably strengthened as regards the value and progress of the Institution".

The progress of the Seminary could be measured from the following account given by Chelliah :

"The number on the rolls of the Seminary at the beginning of 1827 was forty-eight,divided into three classes. In September 1827 (September was the close of the Seminary year) twenty-four boys were admitted from the Preparatory School at Tellippalai,and in September 1829 another class of 29 was received into the Seminary. At first the average age was fourteen or fifteen,but the boys taken last were considerably younger,being on an average not more than 12 years old. This was considered a circumstance very favourable to their acquiring a good pronunciation of English and a thorough education. During these two years twenty-seven students graduated from the Seminary, sixteen in 1828, and the rest in 1829.

"It was intended that these should pursue their studies at least another year,but their anxiety to obtain some employment,and the demands of the Mission for efficient assistants made the authorities of the school deviate from their original plan. In 1830 the total number was 63 divided into three nearly equal classes.There were ten others who while doing teaching work prosecuted their studies higher.In September 1830, thirty boys were admitted,and in 1832,sixty-three. Of the latter fifty were from the Boarding school at Tellippalai,and the remaining were from Day English schools. Out of twenty applicants from respectable families who wished to study at their own cost as Day scholars,ten were admitted.This showed that non-Christians of property and influence had begun to appreciate the education given at the Seminary.

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"Sixteen graduated in 1832, of whom eight continued to be connected with the Seminary as teachers or as students in Theology. At the beginning of 1833 the number of students was 114 in four classes. In the course of the year a class of 22 was formed for Tamil work, as, owing to the large demand everywhere for men with English education, it was not possible to keep the necessary number of English teachers. At the end of two years, however, this class was abandoned and the members of it commenced English studies. Twenty-three graduated in 1834, and found profitable employment".

"When the first class of fifteen graduated", Gratiaen states, "there were two hundred applicants to the new class". Gratiaen, who was a prominent educationist, exclaims that the Batticotta Seminary was for some years the highest achievement of education in the Island. This was high praise indeed. Gratian was not content with giving this encomium only. He further stated in admiration of the system of education followed by the American Mission that "a bright boy in one of these village schools might go to a Boarding School, learn English, enter the Seminary and go back to the school as a teacher or enter the mission service. Till the Americans developed this idea, the English and the vernacular students were distinct, one being for Headman's sons and the other for the villager. Here therefore is not only an admirable school system, but the beginning of the social revolution".

In April 1830 Reginald Heber, Bishop of Calcutta, visited the Seminary and examined the boys in Mathematics and Religious knowledge. He was gratified and was planning to bestow some benefaction to the College, but unfortunately he died on his way back at Trichnopoly. In September 1830 C.H. Cameron and Col. Colebrooke, members of the Commission of Enquiry sent by the British Government to Ceylon, visited the College and conducted an examination. They were most satisfied and soon reported that the Barnes prohibition of further missionaries from America should be immediately rescinded. This paved the way for the arrival of Dr. Nathan Ward and H.R. Hoisington in 1833, and James Read EcKard in 1834.

Colebrooke in his famous Report in 1831 states, "While the English Missionaries had not generally appreciated the importance of diffusing a knowledge of the English Language through their schools, the American Missionaries were fully impressed with the importance of English". He referred approvingly to the Seminary where "the students made some creditable proficiency in other branches of useful knowledge".

The Seminary found a friend in the new Governor Sir Wilmot Horton who visited the College in 1832, and was present at the examination held that year. He was so satisfied with what he observed that he offered a Scholarship, on his own account, for the further education of the best student in the highest class of the Seminary.

At the end of 1835 Poor felt a "Call" specially to do evangelistic work, and being satisfied that he had placed the Seminary on a firm foundation he offered his resignation from the post of Principal. Owing to the restrictions imposed by Government, Chelliah states, that Poor was obliged during his term of office to sustain the burden almost alone, the other members of the Mission rendering only limited assistance in the midst of their Missionary duties.

Poor, as we have seen, was no ordinary educationist. His experiments in Pedagogy were interesting. For instance, he had the monitor system to overcome the enforced shortage of staff. The monitors were students from the upper classes. They were supervised by class superintendents "who had a general oversight of the conduct and studies of the boys", and who were responsible in some measure "for the fidelity of the teachers".

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Poor's revolutionary objectives with regard to the general education of "Tamul and other youth" have been described in detail in the Prospectus that preceded the establishment of the Seminary. Few are aware that he endeavoured to adapt the "native system of arithmetic", which was "thought well worth the attention of students", for it contained "many useful rules both of integers and fractions, and some important formulae of Mensuration, Geometry and Trigonometry, expressed in a laconic poetical manner by which they were easily retained in memory for practical purposes".

Poor also saw to it that the Seminary was not isolated from the life of the community. One of the functions of the Seminary was to influence the intellectual life of the people of the area. The Seminary was the centre which radiated goodwill, stimulated a spirit of enquiry and extended knowledge beyond its walls, reaching the homes and families of its students and their friends.

Poor was an enthusiastic student of Astronomy. It was a subject of study at the Seminary, covering both the Hindu and European systems. The students particularly had a partiality, according to Poor, for mathematical and astronomical studies. Poor found an opportunity to correct the Hindu Almanac (hitherto treated as infallible) that was prepared by a "learned Brahmin" named Vivanadan at Vaddukoddai. Poor noticed some fundamental errors in the calculations made in the Almanac regarding the eclipse of the moon on the 20th March 1829. Poor was vindicated when he demonstrated his position before a large gathering on the day of the eclipse. "No single occurrence", says a Report, "in connection with the Seminary, had had as obvious an effort as this, upon different classes of people in the vicinity, in awakening their attention in the comparative merits of the very different systems now taught in the district".

Although the newspaper of the Mission (which is still continuing) known as the "Morning Star", was inaugurated in 1841, some years after Poor's term at the Seminary, Poor's views on the project which was begun by him under the editorship of two graduates of the Seminary, Henry Martyn and Seth Payson, are worthy of record. "Of the means", Poor is reported to have declared, "through which the civilized man acquires knowledge, the newspaper stands foremost".

There were some constitutional changes at the Seminary in 1835. Chelliah states, "The constitution of the Seminary was adopted in February 1835. According to it the Seminary was to be under the direction of a Board of Trustees consisting of the American missionaries in Jaffna and subject to the control of the Board in America. An Executive Committee consisting of the Faculty and two of the Trustees was constituted to have immediate supervision of the Seminary, and a Faculty consisting of the Principal and Professors, to look after the government and discipline of the Seminary. Besides Professors it was resolved that there should be Tutors in various subjects. The term of study was fixed at six years. With a few exceptions, the students were required to be boarders".

Poor closed twelve years of devoted service at the Seminary at the end of 1835. A Report summarising the "numerical results of the period" states:

> "The whole number received into the Seminary, from its commencement, is two hundred and ninety, of whom one hundred and forty-three now remain. Of the one hundred and forty-seven who have left, fifty-seven are employed by the American Missions of Jaffna and Madura, twenty-two are in the service of the Government, ten in that of other Missions in the

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Island, seven, as tutors in European families and ten have died. Of the forty-one remaining, eighteen were members of the classes now under instruction and were dismissed, as unworthy of gratuitous support, or left from ill health or some other cause; and others not known to be in employment as the result of their education were, a large proportion of them, dismissed for improper conduct, or for want of a capacity to learn.

"Only two of the number finished their studies; they were for a time employed by the mission, but subsequently were dismissed from employment, and from the church. Those in the service of the American missions are two of them Native Preachers, forty-four are Catechists, English and Tamil teachers, and Superintendents of schools, two are Tamil school-masters in common village schools, and nine are in the Printing establishment or engaged in other manual labour. Of the ten who have died, five were in Mission service at the time of their decease. Of the whole number who have left the Seminary, only twenty-two continued their studies until the classes to which they belonged finished their course, and were regularly dismissed".

On the 6th January 1836 Rev. Daniel Poor D.D. submitted his formal resignation when he wrote, "Believing that the time has arrived in the Province of God, in which it is consistent with the best interests of the Seminary for me to withdraw my services as Principal of the Institution; and believing that there is an urgent demand for direct Mission labours in Jaffna, but more especially on the Continent; and having a decided preference for devoting the remnant of my days to this service, I beg leave to request that the Trustees will accept my resignation as Principal of Seminary".

The Trustees in reply resolved "that sensible of the great services rendered the Seminary from its commencement in 1823, till the present time, by their highly esteemed associate, Rev. Daniel Poor, they accept the resignation as Principal only from the conviction that God is calling him to another service".

James H. Martyn in his book "The Life and Times of C.W. Kathiravetpillai speaks of these events as follows, "Of the excellent work of Dr. Poor, as the first and foremost educational pioneer, the best evidence was afforded by his own pupils, of whom or rather of the more brilliant of whom, it was truly remarked that "they would not suffer by comparison with the young men of their age in any country". His resignation was accepted with a high sense of his invaluable services and in response to his earnest desire to proceed to Madura where he established and conducted a new mission, with the assistance of some of the pupils he had trained at Batticotta, such as J.S. Tappan (father of the late Messrs. Chelliah and Muttiah, the well known Colombo brokers) Francis Asbury of Sandilipay (father of the late R.O.D. Asbury) Nathan Strong of Manepay, afterwards connected with the well known firm of printers, under the name and style of Ripley and Strong, Eli: F. Cooly, of Putoor (father of Mr. P.C. Chellappah, sub-Inspector of schools) and Thomas Spencer (father of Mr. L.P. Spencer B.A. of the Wesleyan Central College).

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H.R.Hoisington,a scholar of unusual ability and attainments succeeded Poor and was Principal from 1836-1849 with a short break of three years during 1841-1844. Dr.Nathan Ward who arrived in 1833 was attached to the Seminary from that time as Professor of Medicine,Chemistry and Geology. Ward acted as Principal during the absence of Hoisington. Edward Cope was Professor of English Literature from 1840-1847; Robert Wyman was Professor of Social Literature and Bibilical Interpretation from 1843 until the death in 1845. S.G.Whittlesey took his place,but he died in 1847.

Hastings became Principal in May 1849 with Mills as his assistant. In February 1850 Mills succeeded Hastings on the latter's resignation. In 1851 owing to the illness of Mrs. Mills, W.W.Scudder and Hastings acted for him at different times for short periods. Towards the end of 1852 and during the first part of 1853 a committee composed of John C.Smith and W.W.Howland were appointed to conduct the business of the Seminary with M.D.Sanders as a Professor. Mills finally resigned in October 1853, and until the beginning of 1854 Sanders was in charge. Hastings relieved Sanders and he was the last of the Principals of the Seminary for in 1855 the Seminary was closed.

Among the Tamil members of the staff were, those who were designated Tutors, Henry Martyn who taught Mathematics and Natural Philosophy and George Dashiel who taught Sanskrit, Native Arithmetic and Hindu Astronomy. Other Tamil teachers at the Seminary were the following graduates of the Seminary: E.Warren,Wiseborn Volk (Geography,Chronology and History),P.K. Huseltime (Tamil Native) William Tennent, J.Gregorie(English Language,Grammar etc.,)Elisha Rockwood(Mathematic) Daniel Carroll, Jeremiah Evarts,William Nevins,Asa Lyman,D.H.Clark,B.H.Rice; R.Breckenridge,Cathiravelpillay Wyman and Solomon Williams.The Seminary which was officially known as the American Mission Seminary from 1827 was formally declared in 1846 as the Batticotta Seminary.

Hoistington was a worthy successor to Poor who was a born organiser.The Seminary had been very fortunate to have had during the twentysix years of its thirtytwo years of existence two exceptional men to direct it. Both were deligent students of the culture of the people among whom their lot was cast. They were earnest and profound scholars of the language and philosophy of the Tamils; indeed they much appreciated and admired them,although when it came to defending their own vital religious convictions they never yielded.They were good men, learned men; they held fast to what they knew to be the truth, but they were charitable men too,not in the sense of expending filthy lucre (which of course they did not stint when it was found necessary),but of being lavish with a true love for their fellow-men.

Chelliah pays a handsome tribute to Hoisington."Like Dr.Poor", he states, "Dr.Hoisington took great interest in the study of Astronomy. When on furlough in America he collected funds for building an observatory for the Seminary. The idea was at first approved by the Mission,which voted for the observatory the £.200/- given to it by the Legislative Council for educational purposes.Mr.Dyke,the then Government Agent,offered his services to purchase for the Mission a piece of land lying south of the Mission premises. The idea, however, was relinquished, and it was resolved instead to build a tower for observatory purposes. in the middle of the Ottley Hall. This plan, too, was dropped later for some reason or other.

"Dr.Hoisington's interest in Astronomy was shown by his book on Hindu Astronomy, which has been a text-book prescribed by the Calcutta University for the M.A.Examination in Mathematics. Dr.Hoisington was also deeply learned in Hindu philosophical and religious works, and translated the three leading Tamil treaties on Siva Siddhanta Philosophy: Sivagnana Botham,Sivapragasam and Tatwa Kattalei. In speaking of scientific studies we ought not to

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omit mention of the great interest taken by Mr.Dyke in it. In addition to his offer to help in the building of the observatory,he presented the Seminary valuable books on Botany and apparatus necessary for teaching the subject".

Martyn in his book referred to earlier describes Hoisington as being held by his pupils Samuel Mervin and George Champion as "the ablest scholar among the American Missionaries who have come to the Island during the last eighty-eight years. He knew Latin, Greek and Hebrew well, and his linguistic attainments on his arrival were already so extensive that he soon mastered the Tamil and Sanskrit languages well enough to be able to do into English, in a most creditable manner, some of the standard work in those languages on Saivaism and Hindu Astronomy".

In 1848, shortly before Hoisington relinquished his duties as Principal, Emerson Tennent, the Colonial Secretary of the time and a learned scholar who had already written several books on Greece and who was to write,a few years later, the best work on Ceylon published in that century, visited the Seminary. He has left a record of his high appreciation of the work done at the Seminary in one of his smaller books Christianity in Ceylon, in which he describes the scene that gratified him as follows:

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

Tennent was a knowledgeable person. He was a distinguished product of Trinity College,Dublin of which he became a Fellow. He was also elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. His unsolicited testimonial was well merited. Tennent had other comments to make in the same book. These too are deserving of mention. He says :

> "The number which the building can accomodate is limited for the present to one hundred,who reside within its walls, and take their food in one common hall,sitting to eat after the customs of the natives. For some years the students were boarded and clothed at the expense of the mission;but such is now the eagerness for instructions that there are a multitude of competitors for every casual vacancy,and the cost of their maintenance

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for the whole period of pupillage is willingly paid in advance in order to secure the privilege of admission".

Tennent finally sums up describing the position at the time as follows:-

"Nearly six hundred students have been under instruction from time to time since the commencement of the American Seminary at Batticotta, and of these upwards of four hundred have completed the established course of education. More than one half have made an open profession of Christianity, and all have been familiarized with its doctrines and more or less imbibed with its spirit. The majority are now filling situations of credit and responsibility throughout the various districts of Ceylon; numbers are employed under the missionaries themselves as teachers and catechists and as preachers and superintendents of schools; Many have migrated in similar capacity to be attached to Christian Missions on the continent of India; others have lent their assistance to the Missions of the Wesleyans and Church of England in Ceylon; and amongst them who have attached themselves to secular occupations, I can bear testimony to the abilities, qualifications and integrity of the many students of Jaffna, who have accepted employment in various offices under the Government of the colony".

The Seminary showed signs of decline, although it was not too noticeable, from about 1845. This was due partly to the poor health of Principal Hoisington. But the chief factor was the policy of retrenchment adopted by the Mission. At the time Tennent visited the Seminary, it was, to all purposes a flourishing and promising institution, but his reference to the numbers being one hundred reflected a numerical set-back, for the numbers in the past had consistently varied from one hundred and fifty to one hundred and sixty.

The American personnel in the staff were the first to suffer from the axe of retrenchment. But the Tamil assistants, most if not all of whom were graduates of the Seminary, stepped ably into the breach. Funds, however, were slow in coming. The whole vote for education from the Mission was reduced to £.1,000/- in 1852, and in 1854 the recommmendation was made that the number in the upper classes should be brought down. The following year, the fatal year when the Seminary was closed, the total number on the roll was only 96.

Although it took some time for the changing attitude of the Board towards the Seminary to take effect, yet it was evident that there was a good deal of rethinking in America regarding the wisdom, value and need of continuing the policy hitherto followed in the Seminary.

The American Missionaries, it should be realised, came over to Jaffna when the latter's fortunes were at their lowest ebb. For over two hundred years preceding the arrival of these Missionaries the people of Jaffna had been under the heels of the two foreign conquerors viz. the Portuguese (1591-1658) whose superior arms crushed them, although only after a sanguinary struggle perhaps unique in the annals of Ceylon history; and the Dutch (1658-1796) who took over this erstwhile, proud and independent Kingdom of Jaffnapatam from the Portuguese as booty from the wars, with not even an apology of consent from its inhabitants.

One would concede that the colonial powers had their own ideas of civilising "natives". Between them the colonialists had satisfied themselves that they had each in turn "made Christian" a good part of Jaffna, meaning thereby that a good part of the people of Jaffna had become Roman Catholics during the Portuguese Era, and Reformed Church Protestants during the

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Dutch. The only disquieting element in these "conversions" was that the Catholic would have wished to burn the Protestant "heretic" alive, and the Reformed Churchman would rather have embraced, if he must, the Hindu infidel than the hated "papist". That was the riftridden Christianity that was preached. Despite these tragic contradictions some of the seeds that were sown had really germinated, for from these sprouts have sprung many, among whom there are several Roman Catholics, who are very zealous and stadfast in the faith even unto this day.

But the spirit of the Hindu of Jaffna was broken by the crushing blows of his colonial masters; his historic temples were desecrated and destroyed at the outset by the Portuguese, his books were burnt or stolen and if (to keep body and soul together) he was forced, as in some cases, to make a sign of the cross at his work-place in the morning, he took good care when he returned home in the evening to make his peace with his own Gods by rubbing "holy ash" on his forehead in the darkness of the night.

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"The severe discipline
of 1843 · " vol 41 (1845) p 1.4.