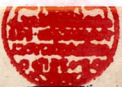


DR. JOSEPH PUTHENPURAKAL S.D.B.

# BAPTIST MISSIONS

# IN NAGALAND

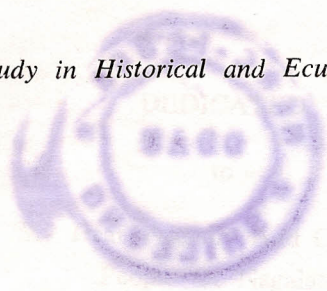
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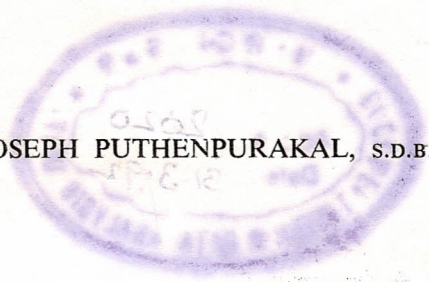
# BAPTIST MISSIONS IN NAGALAND

*A Study in Historical and Ecumenical Perspective*



First Edition, 1984

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DR. JOSEPH PUTHENPURAKAL, S.D.B.



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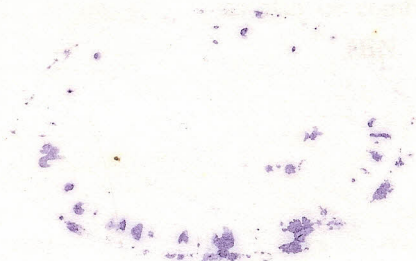
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DEDICATED

to

My Dear Friendly And Colourful  
People Of Nagaland



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“Yes, the destiny  
of evangelization  
is certainly bound up  
with the witness of unity  
given by the Church.  
This is a source  
of responsibility  
as also of comfort.”

(EN. 77)

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## FOREWORD

A look at the map of India will tell us that Nagaland, like the rest of Northeast India, is very much cut off from the mainstream of Indian life. The reasons are geographic isolation, lack of proper communication and the strategic importance of the state—being close to China, Burma and Bangla Desh. The fact that even Indian citizens would require a permit to visit the area makes it all the more isolated and stamps on it a feeling of “foreignness”.

But once you are there, this strange feeling slowly disappears, and you find yourself in the midst of a very warm, hospitable, colourful and hard-working type of people.

When Christ's name was first mentioned among them by the missionaries who belong to the American Baptist group of Christianity nearly a hundred and forty years ago, head hunting was still quite a common occurrence among them. Certainly, it needed more than ordinary courage to go into the midst of ‘head-hunting people’, to live among them and to preach the Good News of love and peace. The pioneer group of Baptist missionaries was indeed blessed with this courage, and Father Joseph's study not only describes the work of the first Assamese evangelist Godhula and the first American Baptist missionaries to the Ao Nagas, the Clarks ; but in a spirit of ecumenical openness he also appreciates them and gives due praise to their dedicated service.

In dealing with the chronicles of events first from 1839 to 1841 and then from 1876 to 1955, the author brings to light new informations and highlights the role of native helpers in the work of Baptist evangelization in Nagaland. Being aware that there exist some doctrinal differences between the Baptist and the Catholic understanding of the Church and her teachings, and wishing to avoid expressions that would require further clarifications, Father Joseph formulates a series of questions on important topics like baptism, bible, church, the Lord's Supper, etc. His preoccupation for visible Christian unity as a sine qua non for effective proclamation is strongly linked

with *unity in truth* which calls for courage, determination, hard work and enduring patience. Since the path of ecumenical cooperation is more accessible than that of theological dialogue, Father Joseph's study proposes a number of areas such as "education, socio-economic welfare programmes in villages and towns, medical services, bible translation works and other literary ventures, joint recreational arrangements for school children, exchange of teachers, child welfare schemes, home for the aged, music programmes, joint celebration of feasts like Christmas, Easter, New Year's Day, important anniversaries, tribal and village feasts, and prayer meetings on select occasions, etc." as first subjects of ecumenical cooperation. He also singles out two items of a practical and theoretical nature in the Baptist-Catholic rapprochement in Nagaland. They are, first, the need for defining a *locus* of *ecclesial* authority in Baptist communities both in the local as well as in the denominational levels; second, the question of infant baptism. The first, because of its importance for any meaningful, orderly and lasting dialogue as *community of Christians*; the second, because unless we recognize each other's baptism as valid there can be no dialogue as Christians.

Though there is a respectable amount of literature on Nagaland, it must be said, that comparatively very little of it is concerned with the origin, growth and *content* of Baptist Christianity in Nagaland. Father Joseph's study, therefore, finds a place in this dearth of material and is the first of its kind on the part of Catholics.

The fact that the author has made use of the original letters and reports of the American Baptist missionaries now housed in the Baptist archives in the USA makes his work of an exceptional value. May it help both Catholic and Baptists to come closer to each other not only as individuals, but more so as "communities of Christ's followers".

Bishop's House

Dimapur

Christmas 1983

Rt. Rev. Abraham Alangimattathil

S.D.B., D.D.

Bishop of Kohima.

## PREFACE

This book deals with *Baptists*. It does not, however, pretend to say all about the Baptists (in the USA alone there are over thirty different groups), but something about Baptists in general and about the American Baptists who worked in the Naga Hills (Nagaland) in particular.

Till the time of the Second Vatican Council an average American Catholic considered an American Baptist as the most difficult of all Protestants to comprehend. It may not be true now, since in recent years Baptists and Catholics have come to know each other more. We may say something similar also about the Catholics and the Baptists of Nagaland. Till recently they lived ignoring each other. Fortunately, the situation has changed for the better. And even though no substantial ecumenical cooperation has been started among them, the changing attitudes point to a hopeful future. Sooner or later, we hope, the Christians in Nagaland *will* unite, thus setting a bold example of unity for the rest of India.

The extent of that union will depend on how much both the Catholics and the Baptists know each other, love each other and forgive each other. It is with this in view that the present study seeks to answer: Who are the Baptists? What is their origin? What is their understanding of the New Testament Church? What are the circumstances which led the Baptists of America to launch into foreign mission work? How did they reach the Naga Hills? How did the Baptist mission start first among the Aos, then among the Angamis, the Lothah and the Semas? What are the content and methods of Baptist preaching? What are the prospects and possibilities of a Baptist-Catholic dialogue?, etc.

Moreover, in the context of an ever growing desire among the younger churches of Asia and Africa to draw up feasible suggestions in missionary and ecumenical cooperation, it has become more and more necessary to re-examine the historical and theological foundations of denominational origins. Our study of the Baptist denomination may serve to initiate this task of missionary and ecumenical collaboration not only in

Nagaland, but also in other areas of Northeast India, in the Bengal-Orissa-Bihar regions and in the Telugu speaking South where there are sizeable groups of American Baptists.

The present work being a modified form of my doctoral thesis presented to the *Urban University*, Rome, it is my duty to thank all those who have helped me to prepare it.

First of all I wish to thank Rev. Fr. Daniel Acharuparambil, the moderator, for his valuable guidance and friendly availability. I am also grateful to Rev. Mgr. Jean-Francois Arrighi and to Rev. Fr. Joseph Metzler for their suggestions. I want to thank in a special way V. Rev. Fr. Mathali Kochuparampil, S.D.B., V. Rev. Fr. Mathew Pulingathil and the Rt. Rev. Abraham Alangimattathil, S.D.B., D.D., the Bishop of Kohima, for their constant encouragement and support. Next my gratitude goes to all my dear Baptist brethren of Nagaland, especially those whom I was able to meet personally in connection with the present work. Among my Baptist friends of the USA, I am particularly thankful to Dr. William H. Brackney and staff of the American Baptist Historical Society Archives, Rochester, New York, and to Rev. R. W. Beaver and Rev. Dean R. Kirkwood of the Baptist International Ministries, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

I also acknowledge with thanks the use of the libraries of the following Institutes and Universities : Eastern Theological College, Jorhat ; Serampore College, Hooghly ; Centro Pro Unione, Rome ; the Pontifical Urban University, the Pontifical Gregorian University, and the Pontifical Salesian University, Rome. I must also express a word of thanks to Vendrame Missiological Institute, Shillong, for undertaking the publication of this book and to Rt. Rev. Abraham Alangimattathil, S.D.B., D.D., the Bishop of Nagaland, for writing the foreword.

J. Puthenpurakal, S.D.B.

Bishop's House 31 January 1984

Dimapur

## ABBREVIATIONS

ABBFM	—	American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions
ABC USA	—	American Baptist Churches in the United States of America
ABHS R NY	—	American Baptist Historical Society, Rochester, New York
ABMU	—	American Baptist Missionary Union
AG	—	Second Vatican Council: Decree on the Church's Missionary Activities— <i>Ad Centes Divinitus</i> in EV, Vol. 1 (1962-1965) 1087-1242
ARCIC	—	Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission
AST	—	Addison Strong Truxton
BIA	—	Bengt Ivan Anderson
BIM	—	Baptist International Ministries
BMS	—	Baptist Missionary Society
BWA	—	Baptist World Alliance
CBCNEI	—	Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India
CDK	—	Charles DeWitt King
CEH	—	Charles Earl Hunter
CNI	—	Church of North India
CSI	—	Church of South India
DV	—	Second Vatican Council: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation <i>Dei Verbum</i> in EV, Vol. 1 (1962-1965) 872-911
EFM	—	E. F. Merriam
EN	—	<i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i> in EV, Vol. 5 (1974-76) 1588-1716
EV	—	<i>Enchiridion Vaticanum</i> (Documenti Ufficiali della Santa Sede, Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane)
EWC	—	Edward Winter Clark
FPH	—	Fred Porter Haggard

- GBH — George B. Huntington  
 GWG — G. W. Gurdinor  
 GWS — George Washington Supplee  
 HBD — Harry Byram Dickson  
 IMC — International Missionary Council  
 JES — J. E. Skoglund  
 JET — Joseph Eric Tanquist  
 JGW — Jonah G. Warren  
 JNM — John N. Murdock  
 JRB — James Riley Bailey  
 LMS — London Missionary Society  
 MMC — Mary Mead Clark  
 NBCC — Nagaland Baptist Church Council  
 NMM — Nagaland Missionary Movement  
 RBL — R. B. Longwell  
 RFD — Robert Fletcher DeLano  
 RLH — R. L. Howard  
 SAP — Samuel Alden Perrine  
 SVM — Student Volunteer Movement  
 SWD — S. W. Duncan  
 SWR — Sidney White Rivenburg  
 TSB — T. S. Barbour  
 UMCA — Universities Mission to Central Africa  
 UR — Second Vatican Council : Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio* in EV, Vol. 1 (1962-65) 494-572  
 WARC — World Alliance of Reformed Churches  
 WCC — World Council of Churches  
 WEW — William Eilsworth Witter  
 WFD — William Fox Dowd  
 YMCA — Young Men's Christian Association  
 YWCA — Young Women's Christian Association

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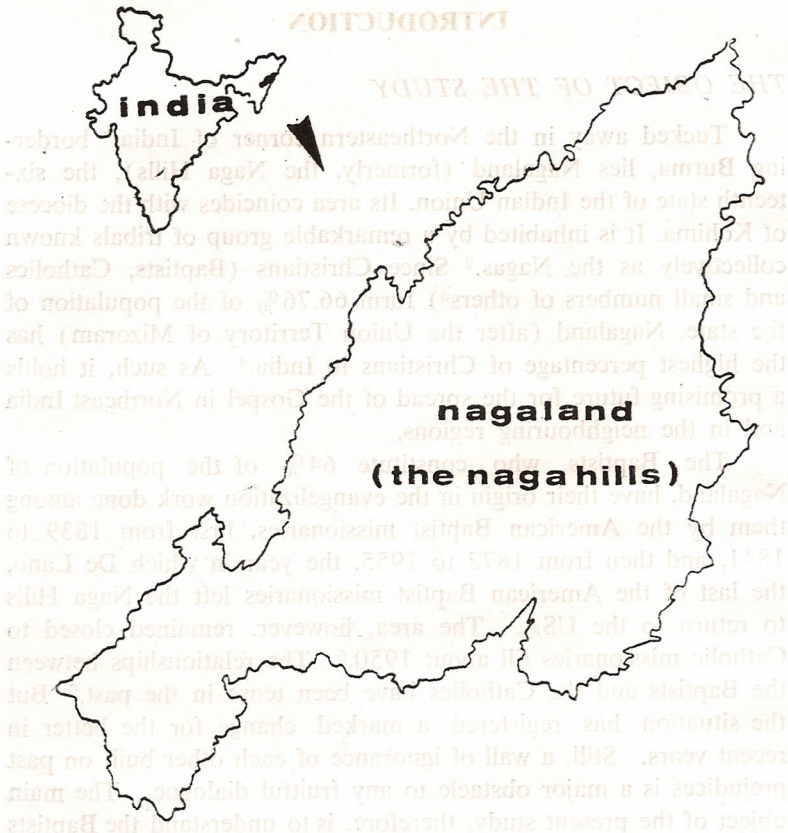
## INTRODUCTION

### *THE OBJECT OF THE STUDY*

Tucked away in the Northeastern corner of India,<sup>1</sup> bordering Burma, lies Nagaland (formerly, the Naga Hills), the sixteenth state of the Indian Union. Its area coincides with the diocese of Kohima. It is inhabited by a remarkable group of tribals known collectively as the Nagas.<sup>2</sup> Since Christians (Baptists, Catholics and small numbers of others<sup>3</sup>) form 66.76% of the population of the state, Nagaland (after the Union Territory of Mizoram) has the highest percentage of Christians in India.<sup>4</sup> As such, it holds a promising future for the spread of the Gospel in Northeast India and in the neighbouring regions.

The Baptists, who constitute 64% of the population of Nagaland, have their origin in the evangelization work done among them by the American Baptist missionaries, first from 1839 to 1841, and then from 1872 to 1955, the year in which De Lano, the last of the American Baptist missionaries left the Naga Hills to return to the USA. The area, however, remained closed to Catholic missionaries till about 1950.<sup>5</sup> The relationships between the Baptists and the Catholics have been tense in the past.<sup>6</sup> But the situation has registered a marked change for the better in recent years. Still, a wall of ignorance of each other built on past prejudices is a major obstacle to any fruitful dialogue. The main object of the present study, therefore, is to understand the Baptists of Nagaland better. This it proposes to do by studying their demoninational origin, the history of their evangelization work with special attention to its content and method, and by assessing them in an ecumenical perspective.

All throughout the nine years of my stay among the Nagas (1972-1980), I have been struck by several of their streling qualities as well as human weaknesses. But one thing remains uppermost in my mind, namely, their extraordinary capacity for dialogue, and their wholehearted commitment to what they perceive as true. But this inborn ability for dialogue and love for truth have not yet been utilized in any considerable manner for the cause of Christian unity and united proclamation of the Good News. Hence, the dissertation has for its object also to prepare the ground for a future Baptist-Catholic dialogue in Nagaland in order to offer a common witness to the message of Christ.



### SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTION

The two objects we have mentioned above, namely, to know the Baptists better and to serve the cause of Christian unity, unfold themselves into a series of interrogations which our study tries to answer.

Who are the Baptists? What is their origin? Where are they mostly found? Why are they generally allergic to any form of authority placed over an individual believer? Can the reason for their traditional fear of authority and their avowed dislike for any "established" religion be found in the circumstances in which the denomination came into being? Can we speak of a founder of the Baptists? While all Christians hold the Bible as important, what are the Baptist emphases? What is their understanding of the New Testament Church? What are the circumstances

which led the Baptists to launch into foreign mission work, and how did they reach the Naga Hills?

Turning to the American Baptist beginnings in the Naga Hills, the dissertation seeks to answer similar questions in the context of the Naga Work. How did the first attempt made by Miles Bronson in 1839 to evangelize the Nagas suddenly come to an end? What were the circumstances which induced E. W. Clark to resume the Naga mission in the 1870s? How did the work start first among the Aos, then among the Angamis, the Lothas and the Semas? What was the content of the early Baptist preaching, and what were the methods the missionaries used? Why was their attitude to the Naga cultural expressions unsympathetic? What was the reason of the Baptist "anti-Roman Catholic" feelings? And finally, what were the factors which influenced their work?

Against this background of the origin of the Baptist denomination and of the history of the Baptist works in the Naga Hills, our intention is to see whether there are profound divergences between the Baptists and the Catholics, and whether the two Christian bodies should take a courageous step towards setting a bold example of unity in the Church in India.

It may be noted, that since we have had access to the original letters and records of the American Baptist missionaries who had served in the Naga Hills, we have been able to point out some corrections on the existing works on Baptist Christianity in the area in addition to some new information.

### THE CONTEXT

Whereas there is a considerable amount of literature on Nagaland, it must be pointed out that comparatively little of it is concerned with the origin, growth, spread and influence of Baptist Christianity there.<sup>7</sup> This is due partly to the fact that, except for the letters and reports of the missionaries, there is very little written record of the early years of the establishment of Baptist Christianity in Nagaland. The people were illiterate, and it was the missionary who first started to reduce their language to writing. It is only in recent years and with the spread of education, that the Baptists themselves have started contributing to literature on Christianity. On the part of the Catholics, there

does not exist so far any study on Baptist Christianity in Nagaland. Our study, therefore, fills at least partly an existing vacuum.

### METHODOLOGY AND PRIMARY SOURCES

The method used in the present work is a combination of the tools of historical research and of field work. The former refers to the authority of the sources consisting mainly of the original letters and reports of the American Baptist missionaries sent from the Naga Hills, and which are now housed in the archives of the American Baptist Historical Society in Rochester, New York, and in the Baptist International Ministries Library in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. It does not appear, that any of the authors of existing works on Baptist Christianity in Nagaland have ever made use of these sources, except by way of citing at times from extracts which appeared in Baptist periodicals mostly for propaganda purposes. ① The field work includes the firsthand information and experiences I have been able to gather through informal meetings, personal contacts and questionnaires during my stay in Nagaland. I had occasion to verify these data with the information I had obtained at the Baptist headquarters during the time I spent in the USA in connection with the present work.

The first four chapters contain much material of a narrative and expository nature, together with some interpretative and evaluative elements wherever they were found necessary. Chapter Five is mostly evaluative.

### THE THEME

A few words of clarification on what we intend by *American Baptists, the Naga Hills or Nagaland, Naga people, evangelization, ecumenism, Church and denomination* may be helpful at the start.

*The American Baptists* : The term American Baptists as used by us refers first, to the missionaries, who worked in the Naga Hills during the period under survey and who came from the USA ; second, to those belonging to a group of Baptists who in one form or another were known as "American" Baptists.

*The Naga Hills or Nagaland* : In our study these two terms mean the same thing. They are interchangeable. The former came to be used especially from 1878 when the British made Kohima their permanent headquarters in the Hills, and placed a Deputy Commissioner in charge of the Kohima and Wokha areas.

It continued well up to 1960 or so, when the name *Nagaland* became more common after it was suggested by over three thousand Naga tribal representatives who met at Mokokchung in October 1959 to ask for a separate state within the Indian Union to be known as Nagaland. It is understood, that the American Baptist missionaries in their letters and reports always referred to the area as the Naga Hills.

*The Naga people* : Our understanding of the Naga people presupposes some knowledge of Nagaland, its history and the cultural riches of the Nagas. And even though in a study such as the present one a section dealing with the description of Nagaland, its geographical features, its flora and fauna, its climatic conditions, the various traditions connected with the origins and migrations of the Naga people, the history of the formation of the present state of Nagaland especially from the time of its occupation by the British (beginning roughly from 1866 when they established a police outpost at Samaguting) up to the independence of India (1947), and again, from the independence of India up to 1 December 1963 when the State of Nagaland was inaugurated, information on Naga tribal institutions like the family, the clan, the village, and descriptions of tribal feasts and religious celebrations, etc., could have found a suitable place, we have decided to omit them.<sup>8</sup> Instead, we shall briefly introduce the *Naga tribal* with his common characteristics which, we believe, have not undergone any considerable change from the time the first American Baptist missionary met him over a hundred years ago. Although we may come across some of these characteristics during the course of this study, the more important ones may be summarised here.

First of all, a Naga by nature is one who is ever eager to know things. It is for this that he discusses a problem first at home, then at the level of his clan, then in the village and in the meetings of the representatives of his entire tribe. At each level anyone present has full freedom to express his views and to ask questions. It is not uncommon to find the head of a clan, besides the meetings fixed at regular intervals, calling emergency meetings to handle an issue important to his clan. This quest for knowledge and a readiness for dialogue impress anyone who has had the opportunity to live for some time in the Naga Hills.

Second, along with his eagerness to know the pros and cons

of a problem, is also his conviction, that nothing can be well managed by an ever debating society. Every Naga knows, that all discussions should lead to some conclusions. And once a decision is arrived at, a Naga is ready to obey it. He has a great respect for his village elders and tribal chieftains. It is here, that one notices a wonderful blend between freedom of discussion and service of authority. In fact, though he is known for his sense of independence and individualistic attitude, no Naga will dare to take the law into his own hands.

Third, every Naga is a community minded person. Many of his activities are group activities. Religion too is a collective and community action. In making sacrifices, for example, no Naga would dare to do things in his own way. He follows the rites of his ancestors and carries out scrupulously what his clan members or fellow villagers would do. Here we may also add, that a Naga is generally very tradition conscious.

Fourth, generous in disposition, a Naga is known for his hospitality. At the same time, a deep-seated spirit of vengeance may even turn his heart of flesh into a piece of flint. Fifth, once a Naga is angry or depressed, it is, indeed, very hard to move him. Sixth, ready to commit himself completely to what he is convinced of, a Naga is courageous and forthright in his behaviour, especially when he is in his own tribal environment. Finally, in every Naga there is a deep-rooted loyalty to his own clan. The Christian teaching on forgiveness and pardon can meet with formidable obstacles when a Naga has his heart set on defending a member of his clan or tribe. No Naga will ever betray his clan member. Seldom or never will he give out a secret that is injurious to the interests of his own clan.

*Evangelization or Evangelization work* : Coming to this important concept which we shall meet often in the pages of this study, we may say, that evangelization means the "Proclamation of the Gospel" (*euangelizomai* is to bring or to announce the *euangelion*). However, to understand this rich and many-faceted reality, we must first know what is meant by the Gospel and the Church. For, it is in and through the Church, the "depository"<sup>9</sup> of his message, that Jesus, the "first and the greatest evangelizer",<sup>10</sup> continues to proclaim the Good News of salvation. To do this summarily and within the scope of this introduction, we will simply take the *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the *magna charta* of world evan-

gelization, as our point of reference, since it is marvelous synthesis of Christ, the Church and the Gospel around the concept of evangelization.

First of all we notice in it, that there exists a profound link between Christ, the Church and evangelization.<sup>11</sup> It follows, therefore, that any consideration of the proclamation of the Good News which would disturb or weaken this unique bond would also distort our understanding of evangelization. "Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her" (Eph 5 : 25). The Church, whom Christ loves to the point of offering himself for her, has as its deepest identity the mission of continuing his redemptive work in time and space. She is sent for it. She exists for it.<sup>12</sup> It is her nature.<sup>13</sup> If, therefore, to announce the Good News is her nature, then evangelization is the only authentic expression of it. The more she proclaims the Good News, the more she lives by her nature and the clearer becomes her identity before men.

This nature of the Church to proclaim Christ's Good News has its origin, through Jesus and his Spirit, in the triune God, who in himself is a trinity of relations or eternal *missions*. "As the Father sent me, so am I sending you (Jn 20 : 21 ; see also 17 : 18).

Just as for Jesus this proclamation of the Good News meant the entire revelation that he made of himself

by words and deeds, by signs and miracles, and more especially by his death, by his Resurrection and by the sending of the Spirit of Truth,<sup>14</sup>

so too for the Church evangelization is made up of varied elements. It includes :

the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs and apostolic initiative.<sup>15</sup>

Any attempt, therefore, to define evangelization only in terms of one or the other aspect of this complex and dynamic reality would only run the risk of impoverishing it or even of distorting it.<sup>16</sup> The history of Christianity is not devoid of such risks. They appeared whenever undue emphasis was laid on a particular aspect of evangelization as its specific scope. As for example, the concept of "saving souls," or of "planting the Church" or of helping the growth of the "mystical body."

Without denying any of these elements, it is necessary to understand evangelization in its global vision as *all what the Church does to be a sign and instrument of God's revelation and salvation for mankind*. In practice, it would mean a variety of activities : saving souls, preaching the Gospel, administering baptism and the other sacraments, planting the Church, dialogue, presence, humanization and liberation, literacy, medical care, and everything else that can help to bring about a "renewal of humanity" in view of God's Kingdom and His Glory.

In this comprehensive view of the mission of the Church expressed in her evangelization work, the first proclamation of the Gospel to non-Christians who have not yet heard of Christ often referred to as "missionary work" occupies a privileged place. Starting with diverse initiatives which are sometimes termed "pre-evangelization," but which are already evangelization in a true sense, this first proclamation is intimately linked with the building up of a self-propagating particular Church within the Universal Church.

A word of explanation on the difference in emphasis between evangelization and *evangelism* (common in Protestant missionary literature) may be had here. The former signifies the "total process of announcing the Good News and bringing people into discipleship with Christ in his community" ; the latter, on the other hand, means the "specific acts or methods associated with the process of evangelization."<sup>17</sup> Evangelism, which came into wide use in the Protestant mission literature in the period following the first World War, emphasized the *kerygmatic* aspect of the evangelization process, and for all practical purposes slowly replaced the term evangelization. In present-day Protestant literature the two terms appear almost interchangeably. For the American Baptist missionaries in the Naga Hills, evangelization meant the winning of people to the Christian faith through the written and spoken word and personal invitations. Other activities were meant to serve this most important goal or were peripheral to it.

*Ecumenism* : It is not within the scope of this study to deal with the questions of a wider ecumenism between Christianity in Nagaland and other faiths elsewhere in India. We use the term ecumenism in its more common meaning of the coordination of activities for Christian unity. These activities include dialogue,

common research, better knowledge of each other, elimination of prejudice, collaboration and common witness, conversion of heart, common prayer for and *with* each other, and a sincere attempt to renew oneself and one's community according to the demands of the Gospel. They prepare Christians to receive God's gift of *visible unity*, so that the world may believe, that they are of Christ, and that it was the Father who sent him.

To conclude what we have been saying so far on evangelization and ecumenism, it may be remarked, that neither evangelization nor ecumenism is an end in itself. They should lead us to *communion* in Christ in the sacraments and in the Church he founded a communion which has its beginnings in this world, and which will find its fulfillment in a transcendent and eschatological salvation in eternity.

*Church* : In our study, the term "church" is applied to the Baptists of Nagaland in its general socio-theological significance, meaning a visible community in which Christ is invoked and in which God is worshipped in the name of Christ. It has the Scriptures as the word of God. Its members possess the life of grace, faith, hope and charity. But it will be seen from the description of the way in which the denomination came into being, and from the analysis of the content of Baptist teaching, that several doctrinal aspects, the reality of the sacraments, and the service of ministry and apostolic hierarchy remain clouded and uncertain in the Baptist understanding of the Church. Further research is necessary to define them better and to give a clearer *ecclesial density* to the Baptist concept of Church.

*Denomination* : As regards the term denomination, we use it to mean the Baptists of the world as a whole, and as forming part of the world Christian family. In ecumenical literature the word is also used to mean any legally distinct group of believers among Protestants of a given tradition (the Lutherans, for example). F. S. Downs uses the word to mean an "autonomous Church body which is under the authority of no higher body."<sup>18</sup> According to him, therefore, there can be hundreds of denominations among the Baptists themselves. In the present study, when we refer to the Baptist denomination in Nagaland, we imply that they are part of the world Baptist body, however loose or indistinct their connections with it may be.

### THE PLAN OF THE STUDY

Chapter One, after a brief look at the geographical distribution of the Baptists in the world, and a general description of their common characteristics, takes up the various theories regarding Baptist origins, and deals somewhat at length with the English Separatist Descent Theory. In it we shall explain the view that, though it is difficult to pin-point a precise moment in history for the rise of the Baptist movement, what we know today as the Baptist denomination originated as an offshoot of English Congregationalism and as part of the left wing of English Puritanism in the politico-religious turmoil of the seventeenth-century England. Rather than point to a single leader as the founder of the Baptist denomination, we prefer to consider some of the leading Separatists as a group as its *founding fathers*. The first chapter also attempts a definition of a Baptist Christian.

Chapters Two and Three analyse in detail the origin, growth and spread of the Baptist movement in the Naga Hills, first in the Ao, then in the Angami, Lotha and the Sema tribes. Our study goes up to 1955, the year in which the last of the American Baptist missionary left the Naga Hills to return to the USA.

Chapter Four, which focuses our attention on a few select aspects of Baptist evangelization work such as the missionaries and their native evangelists, the content of Baptist preaching, the missionary methods, factors which influenced the Baptist works in the Naga Hills, and the reaction of the missionaries to Naga culture, serves as an immediate preparation for our concluding chapter.

The concluding chapter contains a recapitulation of our main observations, an evaluation of Baptist works in the Naga Hills, and a look into the prospects and possibilities for an ecumenical collaboration between the Baptists and the Catholics in Nagaland. In the section on evaluation, the paragraphs on infant baptism and the *locus* of ecclesial authority are an invitation to the Baptist brethren to reassess their stand on baptism, and to reconsider the need of an effective ecclesial authority in the local congregations as well as in the denomination as a whole for any meaningful and lasting dialogue with other Christian bodies. The section on ecumenical prospects with which the study concludes and which we have placed in the context of the present-day

ecumenical movement, does not offer any ready-made formula for the Baptist-Catholic rapprochement in Nagaland. Instead, while recognizing the profound divergences that exist between the Baptists and the Catholics, and while acknowledging the unity we already have in Christ, they point to the need of fostering ecumenical attitude in the minds of the people ("grass-roots" ecumenism), of carrying on prayer for and with each other ("spiritual" ecumenism), as well as dialogue of various forms before reestablishing unity of faith, sacramental life, and Apostolic and hierarchical bond.

Baptist Missions in Nagaland is an original study on the beginnings of the Baptist Church and their extraordinary development in Nagaland. This is the first thoroughly researched and documented work on the contribution made by the American Baptist Missions towards the religious, cultural, educational and economic life of the people of Nagaland.

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