

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE IMPACT OF THE BATAKMISSION'S EDUCATIONAL ENDEAVOUR

In Chapters IV through VII, we have looked in a sporadic and fragmentary way at the impact of the RMG's (= Batakmission's) educational endeavour in the Batakland and at various aspects of the Batak church and society. In this chapter, we shall analyze, summarize and conclude systematically the Batakmission's impact on five fields while noting criticism and comments about it from various circles. The five fields chosen are: (1) the field of the church and the spiritual life of its members; (2) the socio-economic field; (3) politics; (4) culture; and (5) education.

Before we begin our analysis, we must emphasize again that the RMG/Batakmission's educational endeavour did not stand alone but rather formed an integral part of its entire ministry. Therefore, the impact of its educational endeavour on the five fields mentioned must be seen also as the impact of the Batakmission's total ministry. In other words, the educational endeavour is just one approach to highlight the impact of the Batakmission's endeavour on each of the fields listed above.

It must also be noted at this first stage that it will not be easy to accurately detect the impact of the Batakmission's educational endeavour on the above fields because its impact can not always be measured through quantitative criteria, especially so when we discuss impacts which are qualitative. It happens frequently that the impact will only be seen later through a process of interaction and correlation with other fields of endeavour, or with other factors which played a role in the Batakland, and which can only be seen some time after the educational effort had occurred, namely after the Batakmission's existence had come to an end. This matter will become clear in the analysis to follow.

A. In the Field of the Church and Spiritual Life of Its Members

The Batakmission maintained the principle of the unity of church and school from the very

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beginning of its ministry. This unity was not only one of organization, but also of spirit. This meant that knowledge and values in the school would be the same as those communicated in the church so that there would be no bifurcation or confusion in the mind of the pupil. In order to more clearly see the impact of the Batakmission's educational endeavour on the Church as an organization and on the spiritual life of its members, we shall observe both of these from several sides.

1. Increase in the Numbers of Church Members

The RMG/Batakmission did not compile statistics about the number of its school pupils who were not Christian when they entered but who became Christian while in school or after having been graduated. Supposing that such data were available, we could not yet conclude that the schooling was the only factor which caused them to become Christians or church members. It may be that there were other factors which played a role such as the influence from the environment or from associations beyond the school with community members who were already Christians or from the influence of parents who had already received Christianity outside of the school system (which later involved all family members in harmony with the collectivist character of accepting Christianity), etc.

We have also seen, especially in the non-Muslim North, that school pupils who were not Christians generally became Christians later and thus became members of the church. In fact, many of these functioned as evangelists to their families and tended to have a role in bringing the family members, including parents, to Christianity and the church (cf. Chapter Four, B.4.).

With the shifting from an evangelistic strategy of individual conversions (*Einzelbekehrung*) to a strategy of christianization of a whole group of people (*Volkschristianisierung*) which gradually began in the 1870s, there resulted an increase in church members through direct verbal evangelization which was much greater than their increase through the school, but there was always an increase in church membership through the school, especially in areas where the people were

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not attracted to mass christianization, as for example the Simalungun people (cf. Chapter Five, A.1.). It must also be remembered that the impact of the educational endeavour on the increase in the number of church members often happened indirectly. This occurred where pupils or graduates of Batakmission schools, in harmony with their function and role as evangelists, drew people from outside of their schools into the church. Therefore, we cannot make light of the increase in church members through the school, either directly or indirectly. At the same time we are able to see a close correlation and mutuality between the church and school even if viewed quantitatively.

Particularly in the area of the South, where most pupils of the Batakmission schools (whose numbers were much larger than the numbers of pupils in the colonial government s or private non-mission schools) were from Muslim families, not very many of these became Christians. Of course the Batakmission did not compel pupils to become Christian. Nevertheless, remembering that the schools were considered vehicles for evangelization, the Batakmission felt that it had not been successful if students who had been given Christian instruction and education did not become Christians. This was one of the reasons why the Batakmission did not work as diligently as possible to promote education in this area. On the basis of this reality, Van Randwijck concluded that in the Batak region, as also in other mission fields, the mission schools declined if in a formal way proselytism were made the principal goal of its educational effort.¹ Of course, this conclusion was both a criticism of mission education in general and of the Batakmission schooling in particular.

2. Character and Spiritual Nurture of Lay Persons

The adoption of the strategy of *Volkschristianisierung* caused the Batakmission's educational endeavour to become the means for nurturing and deepening the character and spirituality of lay persons who had just become Christians. This was the case because the Batakmission did not want

¹ S.C. Graaf van Randwijck, as quoted in *The Life of the Church* (Tambaram Series, vol. IV), the chapter "Christian Education", pp. 144 and 151.

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to have Christianity of the Bataks be characterized only by numbers or by a certain shallowness. It wanted them to have a deep understanding of the Gospel or of the Christianity just received and embodied in their lives so that this Gospel would result in the renewal of life begun with the renewal of their character and behaviour.

This desire or ideal should be attained through the ministry and process of education. Of course, the process of education in its broadest terms occurred in each of the Batakmission's activities just as Gustav Warneck had defined it, "mission is an educational activity", but in its special and formal sense, education occurred through the ministry of schooling. This was an expression of the principle and characteristic of mission schools, namely that schools were institutions for nurturing (*opvoeding*), and not merely for instruction (*opleiding*).

In the first place, the method used by the Batakmission to attain this objective was to give over a large part of the curriculum to religious subjects even though this put it on a collision course with the government. Secondly, the Batakmission applied the nurturing of discipline, character and spirituality to all types and levels of its schools, and particularly in those schools which had dormitories. Through the process of nurture and strict discipline, the Batakmission hoped that its schools' graduates would become lay persons and church workers who had high Christian, mental and spiritual qualities, and who would communicate these to lay persons and community members in general. It is not easy to measure the results of nurture through the schools in the lives of lay persons, especially those who were products of the Batakmission schools. Even so, there are several indicators which show forth a positive impact of this nurture in their lives or on the Batak Christian community, such as:

(a) Change in Character and Behaviour

At the beginning of the Batakmission's work, the missionaries appraised the Bataks as lazy, slovenly, rude, having no appreciation of time, quarrelsome, liars, arrogant, etc. But after experiencing education and nurture in the schools as well as in congregations, the missionaries' appraisal of the Bataks gradually became more positive. They particularly rated the pupils and

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graduates of their schools as evidencing a new character and behaviour. They were now industrious, clean, orderly, appreciated time, were peaceful, polite, etc. Similar evaluations and observations were advanced by Bataks themselves who were also products of the Batakmission.²

(b) A Marked Enthusiasm for Evangelizing and for Forming New Congregations

There were only a small number of the graduates of Batakmission schools, i.e. graduates of seminaries and other institutions for training church workers, who became professional servants of the church.³ But these were very enthusiastic and played a large role in spreading the Gospel to the surrounding non-Christian communities and in forming new congregations. This reality was seen most clearly in the regions to which Bataks had emigrated, both in their new 'colonies'⁴ and also in the cities. In a similar vein, there were many graduates of regular Batakmission schools and its Dutch schools who became leaders in the Batak Church's congregations both within the Batak region itself and in the emigrants' areas.

But the Batakmission did not always succeed in removing the negative character or characteristics of the Bataks, both after they became Christian and while they were nurtured and conditioned in the schools. Materialism and the headlong pursuit of position were among the most prominent negative characteristics noted by the missionaries. In fact, in their view, these characteristics became even more prominent in those Bataks who had enjoyed education, even those who were seminary graduates. Furthermore, after the colonial government provided an opportunity for them to become civil servants and after modern culture had made inroads in the Batak area offering various products for consumption, many of those educated became averse to doing work

² A.L.Th. Hasibuan in *Immanuel*, April 15, 1928, and E. Simorangkir in *Immanuel*, November 24, 1929.

³ The Batakmission placed *elders* in the category of lay persons rather than in the category of professional church workers.

⁴ Merle Davis (in *The Economic Basis*, pp. 195ff and 445ff) used this term for the new settlements opened by the Toba Batak emigrants.

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with their hands and became followers of the western life style, a fact which the missionaries described as a cultural caricature (Kulturkarikatur).⁵

Facing this reality, the missionaries did not just give up; they worked tirelessly in calling the community and lay persons to put aside those actions, and following up on that call, they increased their efforts to wipe out those characteristics through the educational system of the mission schools. Through all of this, they also tried to plant a new work ethic in the school pupils and laypersons, namely that the objective of the school and work was not to obtain a position and possessions but rather to labour for sake of the whole church and society. This effort was based on the Batakmission's conviction that "Christianity glorifies work"⁶ - a conviction which was related to the view bequeathed by Fabri, "Education to Work" (*Erziehung zur Arbeit*, see Chapter Three, A.1.d.iii.).

The Batakmission realized that the Batak people's materialistic characteristics and their mad seeking after position were not separated from their philosophy of life held before the coming of the mission. It also recognized that those characteristics were supported by others which were not evaluated negatively, such as a high eagerness to learn, ambition to progress, a sense of togetherness and solidarity, and an openness for and curiosity about new things. The mission also acknowledged that all those characteristics were supported by the Bataks' native intelligence and intellectual abilities: a strong memory capacity, a rapid comprehension of lessons, an enjoyment of arithmetic, etc. But the Batakmission desired that all of these positive qualities subject themselves first of all of the Gospel. In other words, the Batak-mission desired that as a first step, the Bataks should attain mental, moral and spiritual advancement and maturity, and only after that should they obtain intellectual and socio-economic advancement. Even though the Batakmission's objective was

⁵ See Chapter Six, A.1.; and W. Freytag, *Die junge Christenheit im Umbruch des Ostens* [Young Christendom in the midst of the Radical Change of the Orient], 1938, p. 83.

⁶ J. Warneck, "75 Jahre Batakmission" in *NAMZ* 1936, p. 89.

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to bring about Batak advancement in all fields, nevertheless the first and most important advancements were in the mental, moral and spiritual fields.

As we have seen, the Batakmission's criteria for measuring the progress and the upgrading of the Bataks had their sources in theological, philosophical and educational beliefs which were coloured by western superiority in all matters. The Batakmission wished to substitute the negative Batak values, character and characteristics with the values which it had brought, and at the same time to purify, enhance and heighten the quality of traditional values to the extent they were viewed positively.

The Batakmission wanted to accomplish a purification of the positive traditional values by freeing them from their roots and context in the old Batak religion, and making them subservient to and cohering to western Christian values. In reality, the melding or cohering was not always successful with the result that there was often a double standard for the Batak Christian, including those who were educated, especially in moral matters, namely there was a Christian moral standard alongside a traditional Batak one.

With reference to this double moral standard, the dormitory system in some schools did not escape criticism from certain observers even though it was always praised by Batakmission personnel as being very successful for the nurturing of the character and spirituality of its pupils. Although the Batakmission worked so that its educational system, including its dormitories, would not cause the students to be alienated from their surroundings, nevertheless Fischer, for example, saw that the dormitories caused the students to be isolated to a certain extent from their context, or to feel themselves to be superior to those students who did not live in the dormitory.⁷ But after they left the dormitory, the moral standard which they thought was higher could no longer be maintained; they too were influenced to follow the traditional Batak moral standards.

⁷ H.Th. Fischer, *Zending en Volksleven* [Mission and the Life of a People] (1932), p. 187, Cf. Marinus Hutabarat in *Immanuel*, July 1, and 15, 1916.

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Even though here and there, negative excesses were found in the Batakmission's system of nurturing character and spirituality, nevertheless those cases rarely occurred, and when they did occur, they certainly were beyond the wishes of the mission. Apart from the matter whether observers agreed or disagreed with the mental, moral and spiritual character which the Batakmission attempted to plant within its pupils and lay persons it nurtured, it can not be denied that the Batakmission schools made a significant contribution towards nurturing Batak church members' mentality, morality and spirituality. Therefore, the Batakmission schools can be said to have fulfilled their function as a means for nurturing church members according to the ideal image which had been determined.

3. Providing Church Workers

During the period of the Batakmission's ministry, most of both the professional or fulltime Batak church workers and the volunteer workers were products of the Batakmission's educational endeavour. There is no need either to make mention again of the great role played by the Batak church workers in building the Batak Church, or the Batakmission's appreciation and praise of them. In brief, in looking at the contribution of all of them as viewed from the importance of church development, the Batakmission through its educational effort and institutions succeeded in producing persons needed by the rapidly developing Batak Church.

Especially the ability and commitment of teachers in the schools has been held up as the main determinant for bringing about the unity of church and school, and at the same time as the main key for the rapid development of these two institutions. This was the reason why the Batakmission worked to maintain the dual function of the teacher up until the very last period of its ministry, even though the government criticized the practice and some teachers objected to such a policy. This was also the reason why the Batakmission conducted its nurturing program in continuity with enhancing the skills and loyalties of the teachers, even though the government using different criteria always ranked most of the Batakmission's teachers incapable of accomplishing their

functions in the schools.

The success of teachers and pastors in carrying out their functions as constituting the pillar and spearhead of the Batak church's development was undergirded by the Batak Christian community's appreciation of them. First of all, that appreciation was based on their high educational level as viewed by the Batakland's standard of the time which gave teachers a high social status in the community. More than that, the community with its background in tribal religion, viewed the church workers as possessors of *the sahala* which was formerly held by the datu⁸ or traditional religion's healer and leader.

As we have seen in previous chapters, one of the important questions which arises in connection with education and the provision of indigenous church personnel is the extent to which the Batakmission succeeded in educating them to be independent workers in harmony with the Batakmission's own ideals. We have seen that on the one hand the indigenous church workers wanted to be given the trust to lead and make decisions in the Batak church to prove that they were able to be ministers independently, while on the other hand the Batakmission never completely acquiesced in their request to be entrusted with leadership while offering the reason that they were not yet spiritually mature. If it were true that the Batak church workers were not yet mature and capable of leading the Batak church after the Batakmission had educated and nurtured them for more than a half-century, then there is no other conclusion than that the Batakmission did not succeed -- even if we do not want to say, failed -- in educating them. Furthermore, we recall J. Dürr's question and criticism about whether the Batakmission truly wanted an independent church in the field of ministry and leadership (see Chapter Three, A.l.e.iii.). Pastor Marbun, a figure in

⁸ Cf. E. Nyhus, "The Encounter of Christianity and Animism among the Toba Bataks of North Sumatra" in *The South East Asia Journal of Theology*, no. 2-3, October-November 1969, p. 46; and A.C. Viner, "The Changing Batak" in *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 52/2 no. 236, December 1971, especially p. 104: "By the missionaries sahala was transferred from the chiefs, elders and hula-hula to the church and its extensions."

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the HKBP's independence movement also made a similar charge. According to him the RMG had failed pedagogically to teach Bataks to become church workers whose ability and quality of spirituality was at the same level and of the same kind as that of the missionaries.⁹

Even if we wish to conclude that the Batakmission was unsuccessful qualitatively in educating indigenous workers in order for them to be independent, the cause would not be in the educational system itself, and likewise not in the inability of the indigenous church workers, but rather in the basic paternalistic and patriarchal character of the missionaries. As western Christians who had an older tradition of Christianity, they continued to try to maintain their superiority over the Batak workers, the fruit of their own teaching. The missionaries did not want to have persons whom they taught reach the same level as themselves and to take over the leadership of the Church as long as they were in the Batak area. It was assumed by the Batakmission missionaries that the Batak Church with so many members, with a field of ministry and activities so extensive, would be unable to maintain it all if they departed.

That assumption was obviously invalid as proved by the achievement of the indigenous church leaders in cooperation with the lay persons of the Batak church to maintain its existence during the dreadful period from the missionaries' internment on May 10, 1940 until the period beginning with Indonesia's independence. Even if the Batak Church of the post-mission era were unable to maintain all fields of work left by the Batakmission, including its schools, in a large part this was caused by factors beyond its control, such as pressures from the Dutch colonial government and Japanese authorities, and to a greater or less extent by the policies of the Indonesian government (see Chapter Seven).

Therefore, it can be concluded that the Batakmission's quantitative effort to teach indigenous church workers largely succeeded, especially if we also include the significant number of volunteers in our calculations, most of whom were products of the regular Batakmission schools.

⁹ H. Marbun, in an interview August 18, 1986.

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But qualitatively, the Batakmission itself gave the impression that its educational efforts were not completely successful. The lack of success could be placed primarily in the way the Batakmission evaluated the indigenous workers in contrast to the potential possessed by these workers themselves. It is clear that the indigenous workers had proved the quality of their abilities and their commitment to carrying on the work of the church. It was just the lack of full opportunity given to them to prove their effective quality.

4. Autonomy in Financial Affairs

We have seen that practically speaking from the beginning of the Batak-mission's ministries, it had planted and nurtured a consciousness in its congregations to be both self-governing and self-supporting, and encouraged the development of both in its effort to form a self-supporting Batak Church. It was not difficult for the Batak people to be invited to give or pay for something which they deemed beneficial to themselves, and which would belong to them because the willingness to do so had already been planted in them by their *adat*.

It must be acknowledged that total financial self-support had never been attained by the Batak Church during the time of the Batakmission because the people's income was not large in comparison with the amount of money needed to pay for the extensive work of the mission. Therefore, the Batakmission requested contributions from its supporters and subsidization from the colonial government to pay for part of the budget for its schools. A large number of congregations also gained indirectly from the government subsidy, namely those congregations served by teachers whose salaries were subsidized. Thus congregations did not need to pay the full salaries for their teachers; it was only necessary for them to provide housing, a plot of land to be cultivated by each teacher and an annual gift of produce from field and forest. An exception to this pattern occurred in congregations whose schools' and teachers' support were not subsidized. These then had to bear the full costs of their teachers and school operations, supplemented by funds from the Batak church's central treasury.

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But if all the funds collected by the Batak church, including produce of field and forest (rice, construction materials, etc.) for support of teachers, school and church buildings, and other physical needs were calculated, the government subsidy plus the contributions from the Batakmission supporters would definitely amount to but a small portion of the total funds expended by the Batak church for its own and its school needs. At the same time, the amount of funds sent to the Batak church from the central treasury of the RMG in Barmen, especially after World War I, were practically insignificant except for the funding needs of its European personnel.¹⁰ In fact, just the reverse was true; at certain periods the Batak Church collected funds to be sent to the RMG treasury which was experiencing a financial crisis. In brief, most of the total church expenditures, including its related activities, came from Batak church members. Moreover, there were certain fields of activities which were supported entirely by the Batak church, namely evangelization as coordinated by the Batakmission (*Pardonganon Mission Batak*). From the financial statistical data prepared for each annual report of the RMG, we see that the amount of money given by congregations increased annually, not to mention the monetary value of the natural produce given.

Even though there is no detailed and accurate data which illustrate the amount of funds coming from congregations enjoying the Batakmissions' schools, nevertheless there are at least two indicators of the large share which the schools had in enabling the Batak church to be self-supporting. In the first place, there is the data from the RMG's annual report which shows the total number of church members who had attended schools of the Batakmission. From this data it may be concluded that the majority of church members had enjoyed the schooling provided by the Batakmission. Secondly, the Batakmission schools equipped their students with practical abilities and skills which helped them earn a livelihood and to increase their incomes. (See section B.2. of this chapter).

¹⁰ J. Merle Davis, *New Buildings on Old Foundations* (1945), p. 150: "The (Batak) churches cannot strictly be called self-supporting, but they have been fully independent of mission financial aid."

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From this we are able to assume that the Batakmission's effort in raising the social and economic standard of the church members through its school system in combination with its nurturing effort in continuity with training them to be responsible for financial self-support played a major role in increasing the total amount of funds collected by the church for supporting its fields of ministry.

This assumption is strengthened by facts previously noted, such as: (1) the contributions of Bataks who were educated for the Batakmission, (2) the contribution of the Laguboti Trade School for building physical facilities, and for giving to the church treasury through the integrated efforts of its workshop, carpentry section and its printing department, and (3) the contributions of educated Bataks, especially emigrants for the development of physical facilities such as church and school buildings in their home villages.

Much more significant than the mere giving of funds was the church members' realization of their responsibility in paying for their own needs, a realization planted by the Batak-mission through education in its schools, and coming to fruition after the people finished their schooling and were found to be active in various sectors of church ministry.

Based upon the above facts and assumptions, we conclude that the Batakmission's educational endeavour made a significant contribution towards the formation of an autonomous Batak Church, especially in the field of finances. In this matter, we agree with Kraemer's conclusion that from the beginning of its work, the Batakmission had been successful in teaching the Bataks to achieve that quality and level of financial independence which were incomparably higher than that found among Christians in other mission fields.¹¹

To be sure, total financial independence had not been attained by the close of the Batakmission's work. But in later developments, we saw the ability of the Batak churches, especially those of the HKBP to pay for their own church and ministries, even though here and there they

¹¹ Kraemer, *From Missionfield to Independent Church*, p. 50.

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have continued to receive funds from abroad for special projects. The raising of the ability to be financially self-supporting during this post-mission period had certainly been due to the support given by members who were products of the Batakmission schools.

After we have traced the impact of the Batakmission on the development of the Batak church's various fields, we see that most of its impact has been positive even though there were excesses here and there which invited criticism. On that basis, we reject the conclusion or the evaluation made by those in certain mission or "Church Growth" circles who declared that mission education was not of much value in terms of fostering church development.

Roland Allen, a prominent figure from "Church Growth" circles, made the generalization from his experience and observations in China that the educational effort was neither an effective means nor method for bringing about indigenous church growth. According to him, mission education was "an alien western education" which "was not able to be understood by the indigenous community" and "was separated from indigenous life". As a result, according to Allen, the endeavour of mission education did not succeed in forming a genuinely indigenous church because the church workers produced by such an education carried on their ministries and leadership according to western styles. What was worse, the mission schools also taught with the hope that these non-Christians would become Christians later even though in reality this did not happen. Therefore, the mission schools taught far more non-Christians than Christians. Furthermore, a friend of Allen continued, mission schools tended to teach more of secular sciences than knowledge of the Gospel, and those sciences were frequently irrelevant because they had originated in western civilization.¹²

Maybe that Allen's and associates' evaluation and conclusion were accurate for mission education in China, or for some other places. However, they may not be considered valid in general, and on the average for all mission education, particularly so in the Batak area. The real situation there gives convincing evidence that the Batakmission's education had made a significant contribution towards the growth of the Batak church and, as we have shown in our earlier analysis, Allen's cause for anxiety did not happen to any degree in the Batakland.

B. In the Social and Economic Fields

¹² R. Allen, *Education in the Native Church* (1925), p. 12ff; and "Education and the Missionary Task" (authored by an unnamed Mission Secretary) in *Discussion on Missionary Education* (1931), p. 7ff.

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Batakmission missionaries frequently stressed that the main goal of their coming had been to proclaim the Gospel as the foundation for a new spirituality for the Bataks, and to found an autonomous Batak church. The educational ministry was carried out in the interests of that objective. But the missionaries also realized that on the one hand, the effort to embody that objective had to be supported by progress and renewal of the Bataks' social and economic life, and on the other hand the renewal of their spiritual life must show forth real results in all aspects of their lives, including the social and economic sphere. It was for this reason that from the beginning of their ministry, the missionaries tried seriously to advance the social and economic standard of living for the Batak people being evangelized. The reality demonstrated that the Batakmission achieved reasonable success in this field.

In this section, we shall look at the impact of the Batakmission's endeavour, particularly in the field of education, on several aspects of the social-economic life of the Batak people, especially those who were Christian.

1. Raising Their Social Status

In essence, due to the *adat's* stress that each Batak person was "a descendent of a king" the Batak society did not have a fixed and institutionalized social stratification. But for various reasons and in certain situations, in reality there were three groups in society even though these were not permanent, namely the chiefs (*rajas*) or leaders of society, the ordinary citizens, and the slaves (*hatoban*). The Batakmission opened an opportunity for each group to attend its schools. It was this policy which was in contrast to that of the colonial government because up until the beginning of this century, the Indies government gave priority to the upper class.¹³

It was also true to a certain extent that the Batakmission gave special treatment to the children

¹³ Cf. Cunningham, *The Postwar Migration*, p. 37; and A.A. Sitompul, "Tradition and Modernization Among the Batak" in *Berita Kajian Sumatra* [Sumatran Research News] vol. IV, No. 2, May 1975, p. 23.

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of the chiefs also in harmony with its strategy of winning all Bataks to the Gospel through winning their chiefs on the basis of the slogan *cuius religio eius religio*. This was seen in the priority given to children of chiefs to enter seminary and the Dutch schools, and even the establishment of the Children of Chiefs' School in Narumonda (which lasted only a short time). But the Batakmission also gave opportunity to talented children of ordinary citizens to continue their education after being graduated from elementary schools. In addition, the Batakmission gave much attention to the slaves.¹⁴ Many of these succeeded in advancing and becoming teachers, pastors, or members of other professions. In this way, the Batakmission along with the government endeavoured to wipe out slavery, and to raise the social status of the former slaves.

Of course, not all teachers and pastors originated from the slave group, in fact most of them came from the chiefs' families or from ordinary citizens. Regardless from which class persons had come, however, after they became teachers or pastors, they obtained a higher social status. This was also the case for members of other professions who had been products of the Batakmission. In other words, education gave a new status to people who had been able to enjoy it, and educated people formed a new social group, the middle class, to borrow a modern term.

This new social class did not immediately displace or negate the position of the chiefs or "traditional aristocrats"¹⁵ in social institutions, including the church. But at the very least these new groups were of the same level as the traditional aristocrats. If up until that point the aristocratic groups were the ones possessing *sahala* in its most powerful form, afterwards it was obtained by

¹⁴ Generally, former slaves resided in the homes of missionaries and were given education according to the *anak piara* system. This system was practised in almost all mission fields and it was here for the first time that education as nurture took place. In later developments, this system was no longer maintained; the former slaves attended the regular schools opened by the mission for the general public. But the spirit or principle of this view was maintained in all Batakmission schools. See Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 180 ff; cf. Chapter Four, A.2.

¹⁵ Zanen (*Voorwaarden voor maatschappelijke ontwikkeling*, p. 124) used this term for the chief or leader in Batak society.

those who had had an education.¹⁶

Even though educated persons have emerged as a group or as a new social class in society, it is not necessary for us to imagine clashes occurring between this group and that of the traditional aristocrats, because part of the former originated in the latter; in fact most of the graduates of the Dutch schools originated from the aristocratic class. What had happened was an overlapping between the two groups, even though the overlapping was not precise. Thus the Batakmission's educational ministry, and also schooling provided by other sources, did not result in the total destruction of the former Batak social structure. Or to use a sociological term, mission education in the Batakland did not result in extensive or obvious social mobility, i.e. the drastic reshuffling of a person's social status from the lowest to the highest.¹⁷ Although there were those who experienced a conspicuous raising of their social status, only a few of these were former slaves.¹⁸ What happened in general was a narrowing of the borders between social groups present before, and concurrently the forming of new social groups which had originated from the former three traditional classes.

Although groups having an education formed new social entities, nevertheless it must be noted that their numbers were very small. The reason for this was that only those persons who had been graduated from Dutch schools and high schools could be called the educated class, and their total was less than 5% of all the graduates of Batakmission schools. It was just this small group which had the greatest opportunity to obtain positions or work which raised their social status.

¹⁶ Cf. Nyhus, *op. cit.*, p. 39: "Education offered not only a means of gaining security but also of increasing ones *sahala* by the power and the honour that would accrue."

¹⁷ Van Bemmelen, "Female Education", p. 7.

¹⁸ In certain places, such as in Sipirok and Angkola, even to the present, the status of a former slave or his descendents continues to make his position in society lower, especially in adat activities, even though his education is high.

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This fact made the Batak community realize that just an elementary level education (*Volksschool, Sekolah Desa*) was not satisfactory for opening opportunities to achieve a higher social status. At the same time they saw that the Batakmission was unable to increase the number and capacity of its high schools and Dutch schools. This was the reason why there was great unrest in the Batak community at the beginning of this century. Its members demanded that the Batakmission drastically increase the numbers of its high schools and Dutch schools. However, since the Batakmission was unable to provide as many as they demanded, they took the initiative to send their children outside the Batakland to obtain further schooling, or they founded schools which they thought would support the fulfilment of their desires to obtain employment and success in order to raise their future social and economic status.

We can conclude therefore, that viewed quantitatively and in comparison with the total numbers of graduates from the Batakmission schools, not many of them experienced an enhancement of their social status. But indirectly, the Batakmission prepared the way for many Batak Christians to obtain a high social status through the schooling track because those who continued their schooling beyond the Batakland or in local private indigenous high schools tended to be graduates of the Batakmission's elementary schools. In other words, the Batakmission shared in their advancement by equipping them with the basic knowledge which would enable them to initiate communication with the outside world both in the matter of continuing their schooling and also in obtaining employment. The latter in turn gave them a more satisfactory social status. Through obtaining a new social status and forming a new social class, this educated group prepared the way for the formation of modern social organizations in the Batakland, organizations which were a mixture between the old pattern of social organization and the new, that is, the kind known through communication with the world outside the Batak homeland.¹⁹

¹⁹ This mixture or merging, was seen for example in the organization of the *huta* or village. The *huta* continued to form part of the territory of the *marga*, but gradually it no longer was an autonomous social unit led by the chief as a traditional

2. Increasing Economic Prosperity

It must be stressed that education was not the sole track for the Batak people to achieve an improvement in their economic prosperity. The Batakmission, too, was not the sole institution which endeavoured to increase economic prosperity or which opened an opportunity in that direction. The colonial government organized the transportation and communication infrastructure (especially highways) even though it used the people's labour, created a relatively calm political situation since 1907, increased health services and agricultural information (including from the Batakmission), opened private foreign-owned plantations and enterprises, and made various other efforts. These initiatives by the government and the Batakmission were supporting factors for increasing the income and economic prosperity of the Batak society.²⁰

Even so, the Batakmission's educational endeavour, one which almost had a monopoly over all the school systems in the Batak area at that time, was an important factor, if not the most important one, in increasing the social and economic prosperity of the Batak community, especially the Batak Christian community.

The Batakmission schools, even though most were only at the elementary level, made the Batak society become one of the most literate tribal groups in the whole of the Dutch Indies (modern Indonesia), and in turn opened an opportunity for Bataks to obtain employment outside of the traditional type. The new kind of work which they obtained, certainly provided earnings which were more satisfactory. Even though only small numbers of the elementary school graduates were

leader, but began to be merged with other *hutas* to form a *negri* which was headed by a person appointed by the government, and this person must have had an education. Cf. Viner, *op. cit.*, p. 109 and Vergouwen, *op. cit.*, p. 3. The merger of the former pattern and spirit with that of the new is strongly felt in *Hatopan Kristen Batak* (cf. Chapter Six, A.2.).

²⁰ Cf. K.J. Pelzer, "The Western Impact on East Sumatra and North Tapanuli", in *The Journal of South Asian History*, vol. 2, no. 2, July 1961, pp. 69ff; and Th. Müller-Krüger, *Der Protestantismus in Indonesien* (1968), p. 262.

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able to continue on to higher schools and to have an important position afterwards, nevertheless having the capital of knowledge and skills obtained while in the elementary schools helped them in developing themselves for various kinds of daily work. This was due to the elementary schools' curricula including a certain amount of practical knowledge and skills which were intended to help the students earn a livelihood later. In short, as Pelzer wrote, the greatest contribution of the Batakmission's elementary schools was to cause society to change gradually from one which was agrarian to one which was bureaucratic, commercial and made up of skilled artisans.²¹

For the graduates of high schools and vocational schools, the increase in economic prosperity, in addition to the enhancement of social status, was something which almost definitely occurred. Except in a few cases²², they generally obtained work which brought them satisfactory earnings. Moreover, those who were able to enter the colonial government's civil service, including teachers in government schools, received salaries which were higher than those who were not civil servants. Teachers in mission schools and pastors, too, obtained larger earnings than the average income of the public, even though their salaries were not as large as those received by government servants. Furthermore, these received various fringe benefits, such as having priority for their children to enrol in regular Batakmission high schools and vocational schools. This was also the situation for graduates of the Trade School, most of whom obtained work in private firms, or became entrepreneurs themselves; their incomes too were much, much larger than that of the unskilled labourer.

This increase in economic well-being was enjoyed much more by the Batakmission graduates who worked outside of the Batakland. In general, they did not find it difficult to obtain employment with satisfactory incomes. This was the case because both the colonial government and

²¹ Pelzer, *art. cit.*, p. 71. Cf. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

²² For example, the reduction in the number of schools receiving a subsidy resulted in some teachers losing their place of employment, and the unemployment of some graduates of Dutch schools during the Depression (see Chapter Six).

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western entrepreneurs wanted to employ them because in comparison with other tribal groups, Bataks were considered to be more tenacious, intelligent, capable, more quickly able to adapt themselves to new circumstances, and ready to work hard.

Seeing the great opportunities opened to high school (both Dutch and the regular kind) graduates for obtaining a higher social status and for enjoying greater economic welfare, Batak parents were eager to send their children to schools both in the Batak area as well as outside it. They became increasingly aware that the school was a most effective avenue and vehicle for giving form to their ideals, namely to become wealthy, respected and to have power. For this reason, they looked upon the Batakmission policy which limited the number of its high schools and Dutch schools as but a half-hearted attempt to advance the interests of the Batak people, and the Batakmission's effort to hinder their intentions to emigrate as an obstacle for fulfilling their desires to fully advance themselves in the social and economic fields.²³ This desire which had been largely thwarted during the mission era became almost uncontrollable after World War II; as if a flood tide, the Bataks flowed to other districts of Sumatra, and to other islands including Java in order to obtain arable land, to seek work, as well as to obtain an education as advanced as possible (see Chapter Six, A.1.).

If we view the success of the Batakmission from the perspective of the desire of the Batak people to seek education in order to raise their economic well-being, then we may conclude that its effort in the field of education was very limited. However, if we view the Batakmission's achievement in economic improvement from the side of its basic reason for coming to the Batak area, namely to christianize the Batak people and to found a church, then it is only natural that raising their social status and income was but a secondary goal. In any case, it must be acknowledged that the Batakmission succeeded in increasing the Bataks' consciousness about the

²³ In fact, Castles, *op. cit.*, p. 73, saw that this limiting was the reason why so few Batak Christians at that time succeeded in becoming professionals with higher education, for example, doctors, engineers, lawyers, and high government

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importance of education as a means for enhancing their economic well-being, particularly so for the Bataks of the northern region. Even though there were Bataks who charged that the missionaries were hindrances to their ambition for advancement, nevertheless it is clear that it was just the Batakmission which began the transition of the Batak people from being a cold society (i.e one lacking communication with the outside world) to being a hot society.²⁴

3. Enhancing the Status and Role of Women

Observers from the disciplines of sociology and anthropology may engage in lengthy debate about whether the status of Batak women was very high or very low during the pre-mission time. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that up to the period of the coming of missionaries, in comparison with men, women's opportunities for obtaining education and advancement were very limited.

We have seen that from the beginning of the Batakmission's presence in the Batak area, it had given much attention to raising the status and role of women through the avenue of education, and the effort to conscientize society to accept the reality that women had the right to schooling and to achieve advancement. Thanks to this effort, the number of women in Batakmission schools, including its Dutch schools, increased from period to period. In a similar way and parallel with the rapid increase in the number of women missionaries (*Schwestern*) as members of the Batakmission, schools especially for girls/women increased rapidly. As a result, the Batak region, along with other mission areas, occupied the highest place in the whole of the Dutch Indies in terms of the number and percentage of women in schools and those who were literate (even if we do not wish to call this having an education).²⁵

officials.

²⁴ This term used by Viner, *op. cit.*, p. 109, who had borrowed the term from the sociologist Levi-Strauss.

²⁵ A. Limburg, *De School in het Zendingswerk* (no publisher or year listed), p. 23.

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It is also of interest to highlight the research of Van Bemmelen (Chapter Six, B.2.). Although the consciousness of the Batak community about the importance of sending its daughters to school continued to increase, even to the highest possibility available (with reference to the standards and opportunities of the time), nevertheless the goal was not so that women would obtain economic autonomy as female workers, but rather to open opportunities for women themselves and their families to raise their social status through marriage with men of higher position and social status.

The Batakmission itself did not expend much energy in making the women whom it taught become workers who had economic independence. The *Meisjeskopschool* which it operated in several places was not intended to produce women who were financially independent, but who would be model Christian women or wives in faith, piety, morality, industry, cleanliness and health. This was also the case with the women graduates of the Dutch schools, high schools and vocational schools. They were not taught to be financially independent even though the opportunity was opened in that direction, and their abilities were significant as this was expressed by Batakmission workers in their praises and appreciation of the work and abilities of the women whom they had taught.

It was not just in the field of 'secular' work that the Batakmission lacked interest in teaching women to be equipped for financial gain or in providing them with such opportunities, but also in the structural ministries of the Batak church. During the whole period of the Batakmission's work, not a single woman was ever appointed elder, teacher/preacher in the congregation, evangelist, and of course never as a pastor, even though the missionaries never ceased praising the piety, faithfulness and depth of the Batak Christian women's understanding of the Christian faith.

To be sure, as late as 1907 there were a number of Batak women who served in the cadre of Batakmission teachers with their numbers increasing markedly after their completion of the special course for teachers at the Laguboti *Meisjesschool* and the School for Teachers at Padangpanjang. However, not one of them ever held the dual function as teacher in the school and preacher in the

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congregation.²⁶ The *Bijbelvrouw* (see Chapter Six, B.2.) too, never held any office in the congregations' structural organization; they only accomplished functions limited to women and children.

Why did the Batakmission demonstrate such an attitude and policy? We may assume that the reason for this would be found in its tendency to adjust itself to the pattern of thinking and understanding of the people, namely that women did not need to have independence to live and work for themselves, and in any case women's status was held to be lower than that of men. Even if this assumption were correct, the more fundamental cause would be found in the European traditions of church and society, or at least in the traditions of the missionaries themselves. Up until the beginnings of this century (and certain areas, even to the present) there has been no full emancipation of women in European church and society. In the RMG itself, for example, both in Germany and in the Batak area, there was no church office held by women.

Even so, it must be acknowledged and concluded that within certain limits, the Batak-mission tried hard to elevate the status, level and role of Batak Christian women. Without the effort of the Batakmission, especially in the field of education, it could not be imagined that at the end of the Batakmission's work, most Christian Batak women would be literate. At a minimum, the Batakmission had opened and prepared a way for the Batak Christian women to develop their potential during the post-mission era. In other words, the progress of Christian Batak women at the present can not be separated from the effort begun by the Batakmission in the previous period.

C. In the Field of Politics

The Batakmission workers stressed many times that they did not want to be political or be involved in political matters; their goal in coming to the Batakland was neither to plant nor to support a particular political power, but rather to proclaim the Gospel. This emphasis was

²⁶ Cf. Gramberg's criticism of this situation, Chapter Seven.

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expressed in connection with the emergence of various political movements and forces in the Batakland. But that declaration indicated that as products of their age, they had a particular political view, especially the one inherited from Fabri.

In their relationship with the Dutch colonial government, indeed the missionaries often manifested a critical attitude. In fact they were particularly courageous in opposing government policies which they thought militated against concerns of the Batak community as well as the mission, actions which caused them to be frequently disliked by the government. But in harmony with the political views which they upheld, they often supported the actions and policies of the government, for example the annexation of the Batakland.

The political convictions or understandings which they followed played a role and an influence in their educational efforts. On the other hand, the same understanding brought about a reaction from the Batak community which they were teaching. We shall look at these one by one.

1. Providing Civil Service Employees

The application of the Dutch colonial administrative system to the Batak region brought about a need for low level indigenous civil servants. Initially, this need was fulfilled by the government schools in South Tapanuli. But the Batakmission protested against this policy. In order to fulfil the needs in the area of its own work, the Batakmission urged the government to recruit employees from among the Batak Christians who were products of its schools. The government fulfilled this request later, especially after it had signed an agreement granting monopoly rights to the Batakmission for schooling in the northern region of the Batakland. This caused the mission to be willing to have some of its teachers become government employees not only in the field of education but in other fields as well. This was also one of the reasons which prompted the Batakmission to found the school in Narumonda for the Children of Chiefs, namely so that there would be civil service candidates who were Christian in faith and character. Even though this objective was not attained so the school had to be closed, nevertheless almost all civil servants in the Batak

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area were graduates of the Batakmission schools, particularly so after it opened schools in the Dutch language.

While children were in the Batakmission schools, it planted loyalty in their hearts and minds to the colonial government and the Dutch nation. In fact the missionaries spoke of this as patriotism. To a certain extent this effort was successful; in fact so much so that the colonial government praised the seriousness and loyalty of its employees, most of whom were products of the Batakmission schools. In the magazine *Immanuel*, not infrequently articles appeared which were written by Batak bureaucrats and teachers receiving a government subsidy and containing expressions of gratitude and support for the colonial government. In fact, a significant number of these persons imitated the Dutch officials' way of life and pattern of thought.

In short, these indigenous employees, together with the missionaries, justified colonialism in the Batak area in particular, and in the Dutch Indies in general, because of the thought and conviction that colonialism had brought benefits to the Batak society and region. These were the same ones who opposed the emergence of the nationalist movement in the Batakland. Whether this thought and conviction were based on a deep understanding of the essence of colonialism or only on the practical gains which the writers enjoyed, and whether this conviction could be defended responsibility from the side of theology are other issues altogether.

2. The Rise of Nationalism

Obviously not all products of the Batakmission schools were supporters of colonialism. In fact, the principal members of the nationalist movement, especially the HKB, were graduates of its schools or at the very least had attended them for a certain period.

Observers do not deny that a large part of the influence and stimulation for nationalism originated outside the Batak area, namely from the understanding of nationalism and its movement which had grown in Java and East Asia in general. But they also noted that the national spirit and consciousness (or more accurately, regional spirit and consciousness) which grew in the hearts of

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some of the Bataks were just the feelings which had been produced by the educational processes experienced in the Batakmission schools.

After having observed the growth of the spirit of nationalism and its movement in the Batak area, Ed. Müller, for example, came to the conclusion that the self-consciousness of the Bataks as a people was raised by the content of the lessons or the educational system of the Batakmission. On the basis of the principle of "caring for and developing the distinctive characteristics or cultural heritage (*Volkstum*) of the Bataks to the extent these were valued positively", the Batakmission provided a very important place in its curriculum for the Batak heritage. In fact through this approach, the Batakmission tried to purify, preserve and develop the Batak culture. This effort caused the Batak society to not only appreciate its culture, but to increasingly appreciate it as a valued heritage with the result that the people's identity as Bataks became more and more clear and firm. Therefore in facing the power and superiority of Westerners, there grew the strong resolve in Bataks themselves that "We are able to be just like them."²⁷

This self-consciousness as a people became mixed later with the nationalism coming from outside which gave rise to an anti-colonial or an anti-foreign authority sentiment. This in turn became crystallized in the nationalistic, anti-colonial movements and organizations. This consciousness grew especially in the souls of educated persons, a large number of whom were products of the Batakmission schools. With reference to this fact, it can be said that obviously the Batakmission itself had no intention of planting such a political consciousness in its students and never dreamed about stimulating an anti-colonial sentiment and attitude. As a product of its age, it would have been impossible for the Batakmission to have prompted an anti-colonial and anti-foreign spirit in its pupils. But just this reality has happened many times in history; values planted through certain processes may become a boomerang which returns to attack their sower.

In any case, the Bataks ought to thank the Batakmission because whether directly or indirectly,

²⁷ Ed. Müller, "Strömungen im Batakvolk und die Mission", in *BRMG* 1930, particularly p. 339; and Freytag, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

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through its educational effort it shared in planting or, at the least strengthening a political consciousness in them, namely a people's and national consciousness whether as an independent people, or as a part of a more extensive national group.²⁸

D. In the Field of Culture

Starting from the two-sided RMG/Batakmission understanding of culture, the missionaries classified Batak cultural elements into three categories: those positive, those neutral and those negative. Those elements deemed positive were used to support its goal. Those neutral elements could be used by the Batakmission for supporting its program while remaining vigilant to the possibility that their influence could be mixed in with elements considered negative. Those elements viewed as negative, namely those related closely with the traditional tribal faith (heathenism) were firmly rejected; all church workers and members, including school pupils, were forbidden to follow their practices or possess their objects.

Of course, this categorization did not take place automatically nor was it always able to be firmly maintained, nor was a common view always attained. For example, in traditional Batak music there were elements which were firmly rejected by the Batakmission, such as the *gondang* which was presented along with a dance (*tortor*), because they were clearly deemed to cause the

²⁸ According to Castles, *op. cit.*, pp. 181ff and 199, the pre-mission Bataks had already possessed a "primitive ethnocentric superiority" and this became strengthened by the missionaries after the Bataks became Christians until there were Bataks who called themselves God's chosen people just as Israel had been. When the Bataks left their area, they were mocked as members of an uncivilized tribe, cannibals, etc., which made them feel inferior. But gradually, after their numbers in dispersion increased, and more of them occupied important positions thanks to the education they had received, the feeling of superiority returned, in fact it became chauvinistic. Later this became a problem within their own circles, whether Bataks were a nation (Batak) or a part of a larger nation (Indonesia). There were some who opted for the first and others for the second, and also others who choose both, "Yes, we are Bataks, but yea, we are Indonesians".

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reemergence of the old beliefs. But there were also elements of Batak music which did not issue in a consistent and uniform attitude and evaluation on the part of the missionaries, for example towards various instruments, rhythms and poetic expressions (see Meerwaldt's and Bielefeld's differences, Chapter Five, D.1.).

Nevertheless, it is evident that the Batakmission workers were selective in their attitude towards Batak culture by utilizing a standard for selection brought from Germany. At the same time, this indicated that the Batakmission had a tendency to look upon Batak culture as a collection of elements which could be classified, but it failed to see the culture as a unity or as a comprehensive system or totality. From the beginning of the Batakmission there had been critics of this understanding and evaluation. Fischer, a Dutch ethnologist who visited the Bataklands about 1930, held to the opinion that the Batakmission was frequently dishonest in its attitude and evaluation of culture. On the one hand, certain elements were evaluated negatively because these were considered 'pagan' and in fact the mission tried to destroy them, while on the other hand it was unwilling to realize and acknowledge that there were elements in western culture which had long been considered Christian, but which in fact had originated in the pagan world.²⁹

In point of concrete fact, the Batak culture could not be classified. Therefore, the categorization which the Batakmission had made started from an assumption which did not agree with reality. Ethnologically, this approach was in error and it could not be defended theologically. Even so, it much be acknowledged that through the Batakmission's educational system and activities and in its other ministries, it had endeavoured to care for and had rendered great service in developing a number of elements of Batak culture from those deemed positive and neutral.

The bringing of a certain amount of knowledge and skills originating from the Batak culture into the school curriculum and by recording it in various kinds of literature (including literature which had been worked up through contests and writing assignments for teachers and pastors)

²⁹ Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 144 ff.

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continued to be well-maintained until the conclusion of the Batakmission's work. More importantly, the Batak community was aroused and stimulated to do research, to deepen and to appreciate various heritages received from its ancestors. For this reason, elements of Batak culture have been preserved even though western culture has made strong inroads into the Batakland since the beginning of this century causing a number of Bataks to be ensnared by a western pattern of life.

Although the Batakmission endeavoured to maintain and develop various elements of traditional Batak culture, obviously this did not mean that it rejected modern western culture. In fact for a large number of Bataks, the Batakmission was the first agent for introducing them to modern western culture. But towards it, the Batakmission also exercised a selective attitude. Those elements in it which it considered positive were permitted entrance into Batak society and were introduced through its educational effort. Thus the Batakmission tried to bring together all cultural elements which it deemed positive, those originating in traditional Batak culture as well as those from the modern West. Just this combination of the two kinds of culture caused the Batak community to advance more strongly and become cultured.

In essence, through the Batakmission's categorization, selection and combination of cultural elements accomplished also through its educational effort, it tried to tear down the basic structure of traditional Batak culture rooted in a belief system judged to be 'pagan' and at the same time it sought to construct a new foundation rooted in Christianity. In other words, taking a leaf from G. Warneck's view concerning culture, the Batakmission tried to construct a Christian Batak culture based on those Batak and Western cultural elements evaluated as positive.

Until the end of the Batakmission's period of ministry, it continued to be busy constructing that new culture, one which it never finished. This effort was inherited by the post-mission Batak church, including the Batakmission's selective way of understanding and evaluating, and its criteria for that selection. The influence of the Batakmission's way of thinking and its view of culture continues to be dominant in the Batak church up to the present day. Of course, we have a right to

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inquire whether there is such a thing as a Christian culture. This problem has been much debated by missiologists and theologians.³⁰ If one were to ask the Batakmission if this were possible, the answer would be definite, "Yes, of course". It was that conviction which motivated the Batakmission to create a cultural structure which was said to have been based on Christian principles. Whether this conviction were true or not, the Batakmission succeeded in maintaining and developing the elements of traditional Batak culture and bequeathing this view of culture to the Batak church through its educational as well as other ministries.

Nevertheless, we must ask whether the Batakmission succeeded in eradicating those values or elements which it had stamped as pagan . Even though it had worked tirelessly to stamp out or to convince the Bataks that those elements which it had identified as 'negative' were indeed a danger to their Christian faith, it is obvious that many of those could not be eliminated. To be sure most of the material elements have been put aside, but values characterized as abstract, such as the spirit, attitude and view of life followed by Bataks, continue to exhibit those influences and infusions identified as 'pagan' by the Batakmission. At the same time, this provides proof that the holistic Batak culture cannot be so summarily categorized and its religious foundation can not be substituted easily by another.

E. In the Field of Education

Especially if viewed quantitatively, many people would quickly say that in general the Batakmission's contribution towards developing the field of education was very great, especially in the Batakland. Modern authors from government circles who write the history of education in North Sumatra have expressed their general appreciation for the commendable service and

³⁰ See for example H. R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (1951), especially p. 30ff, concerning E. Troeltsch's view of Christian culture; cf. Schreiner, *Adat und Evangelium*, pp. 135-151, which analyzes the Batakmission's effort to compose specifications for a Christian *adat*.

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contribution made by the Batakmission's educational endeavour.³¹ But such a general expression of appreciation or statement is insufficient as proof of the Batakmission's educational effort for the development of the field of education in the Batakland or in North Sumatra, or for that matter in Indonesia itself. Indeed, we do not have any pretension or ambition to examine it so extensively. What we are able to accomplish is just to look at the contribution or impact of the Batakmission's educational endeavour as a system of education developed by a mission and Church in Indonesia, even though while accomplishing this, we are also able to note from time to time its contribution and impact on the field of education in Sumatra and in Indonesia in general.

The main question which we posit here is to what extent the system of education developed by the Batakmission for almost 80 years obtained a place in, or made a contribution to the system of education developed by the Christian mission in the past and in the church of this modern day in Indonesia? Before we answer that question, let us note the quantitative contribution of the Batakmission.

At the end of the Batakmission's period of ministry, 90 percent of the Batak community was literate, and most of those persons were products of the Batakmission's schools. This was able to occur because practically speaking a mission school was to be found in each village, even in the most remote places, although the physical condition of most of those schools was in a very poor state. In the decade of the 1930s, among the various mission fields in Indonesia, the Batakland or the Tapanuli area was the one occupying the topmost place in comparison with the number of inhabitants who were Christian and the number of school pupils.³²

³¹ Masykuri and Sutrisno Kutoyo (ed.), *Sejarah Pendidikan di Daerah Sumatera Utara* [The History of Education in the Region of North Sumatra], 1910, pp. 13, 36, and 39, for example, which declared that "... education in the North Sumatra region was begun by Christian religious workers" and "if we wish to talk about education in North Sumatra, we must also discuss the schooling conducted by Christian missions ... particularly that which was conducted by the RMG".

³² See, for example, J. Rauws, *The Netherlands Indies* (1935), pp. 159ff (Appendix III: General Statistics).

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One can see then that quantitatively, the Batakmission made an impressive contribution to the campaign to wipe out illiteracy and towards the development of the minds of the people in that area.

More than that, the Batakmission had brought about a very marked interest in schooling on the part of the Batak society, a matter which continued to be maintained until the post-mission period, in fact up to the present. From the national statistics, we see that from year to year, North Sumatra occupied a top place among the provinces outside of Java in the percentage of inhabitants who attended school from the elementary school to the university.³³ Supposing that we were able to obtain data about the number of Bataks who attended school or continued their schooling outside of North Sumatra, we assume that the percentage level would be higher yet. Therefore, it will not be too far afield when it is said that "after the island of Java, North Sumatra was the region which experienced the most rapid progress in education"³⁴, and in this connection, "the service of the Christian mission bodies was meritorious in achieving the raising of the educational level of the inhabitants in this area, both in formal as well as in informal education".³⁵

The achievement of the Batakmission in operating so many schools and producing so many educated members of Batak society (at least who were literate) was not because of the sufficiency of support in effort and funds received. We have seen how throughout the period of the Batakmission's work, it was continually experiencing difficulties, in fact crises in both areas. Therefore, Graves' statement is not accurate when he said that in the environment of the 'pagan Bataks', namely in the Batakland or Tapanuli, the advance in education was due primarily to the

³³ See, for example *Statistik Indonesia 1984* (1985), p. 60 (Table 3.1.3: Inhabitants according to province or island) in combination with pp. 156-171 (Table 4.1.2 through 4.1.12: the number of schools, teachers and pupils in the elementary schools through higher education, according to provinces).

³⁴ Masykuri and Kutoyo, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 14.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

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government's support in effort, funds and policy.³⁶ The success of the Batakmission must be placed especially on the motivation and the views of its personnel supported by the desire and motivation of the Batak community (even though there was often a collision between the views of the two parties).

We shall now make an inventory of several important matters in the Batakmission's educational system whose influence has tended to be echoed in the effort to compose a system of Christian schooling in Indonesia, in fact it may find echoes in the effort to shape a national educational system while continuing to be aware that we do not have all the accurate tools and measurements to detect and to identify the degree of influence of the Batakmission in them.

1. As the heir of the educational views of the reformers, especially Luther, the Batak-mission strongly emphasized that education was the right of each member of society, that therefore schools must be made available to the extent possible, and must be opened to all its groups. In other words, the Batakmission participated in proclaiming that education built on Christian principles meant education for all persons.

But this view was not separated from the first goal of the Batakmission's educational ministry, namely to support the formation of a strong and independent people's church where each member must be able to read the Bible and other Christian literature. It was just this issue which Kraemer saw as the point of weakness in the Batakmission's education:

The honest missionary concern for the spiritual welfare of the people was placed in too narrow a framework. The missionaries resented the breakdown of the country's geographical isolation, because they wished to perpetuate its spiritual isolation in order to be able to continue unhampered the Christian education of the Bataks according to their own insight. ... They have regarded the Batak people too exclusively as material for the realization of missionary aims (in themselves excellent). Missions were at stake and not the Batak people. They were interested in education as a missionary instrument and not as an instrument or nucleus of power for the education and elevation of the people Missions were too

³⁶ E.E. Graves, *The Ever-Victorious Buffalo: How the Minangkabau of Indonesia Solved Their "Colonial Question"* (1971), p. 8. This statement is related to the conclusion that in the Minangkabau area, in distinction from Tapanuli, the advancement of education occurred primarily because of the efforts of the indigenous community.

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exclusively possessed of the desire to raise a strong Christian community and a strong Church, and did not sufficiently desire to build up a strong Christian people.³⁷

In other words, within the strength of the Batakmission's total educational view, there was a weakness in its educational view and system.

2. The Batakmission tried to involve the whole community in accomplishing education. It wished to bring about a growth in the realization that education was the responsibility of the whole community, both in readying its physical means and operating its finances (including facilities and teacher support) and in encouraging an enthusiasm for learning and for supervising the learning process for children. In short, the Batakmission endeavoured to utilize and to develop the principle of "community education" which was embraced by the pre-mission Batak community. Involvement of the whole community in turn brought about an intense desire and an enthusiasm for learning and to send its children to school until its slogan "Learn! Learn!" formed a daily shorthand symbol of the Batak community's thirst for knowledge, especially from the beginning of this century.³⁸

Certainly, the Batakmission's educational effort and view were not the only factors which played a role in bringing about growth in great enthusiasm and desire for schooling. The personal potential in each Batak individual as well as social, economic and political developments in the Batakland had a role as well, especially so since the beginning of this century. Nevertheless, it needs to be acknowledged that at the very least, the Batakmission was the first agency which stimulated the desire for learning, which cultivated the positive potential in each person and was the agency which introduced the Bataks to the "modern world" with all of the value which this promised. The Batakmission's effort joined with other factors mentioned above brought about an extraordinary fanaticism in Batak parents to send their children to school even if this meant bearing

³⁷ Kraemer, *op. cit.*, p. 68ff. If Kraemer's criticism were true, that would mean that the Batakmission would not have been faithful to the *Volkschristianisierung* view of G. Warneck which stressed just the formation of a strong and independent Christian community.

³⁸ Verwiebe, *Tole!*, p. 36.

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whatever sacrifice was required for that purpose. Cunningham and Castles saw this reality as "a dramatic story in modern Indonesia".³⁹

3. The Batakmission tried to find a place for "local content"⁴⁰ in its educational endeavour, namely knowledge and practical examples from daily life and then integrating them into the knowledge brought from the West. With this method, the pupils did not feel alienated from their daily environment and did not feel that the knowledge taught, including the Christian religion, was something foreign to them. As a result, their interest in learning became motivated while at the same time they came to increasingly appreciate their cultural heritage and homeland. This method also caused them to quickly perceive the value of the knowledge studied for activities related to earning a livelihood or in accomplishing their daily work.

In Chapter Three, we saw that the integration method had been propagated by European educators earlier. The missionaries had studied this method in their seminary, in fact several of them had experienced it in institutions for teacher education. Even though this method was not original to the Batakmission or Christian Missions in general, we may assume that among the various institutions which brought the western educational model and which operated schools out of this model, missionary personnel were the first to have used it in Indonesia. Moreover, if we remember the criticism from missionary circles about the character and content of the Indies colonial government's education as being too theoretical and intellectual, then our assumption is given increased strength.

³⁹ Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 69; and Castles, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁴⁰ This expression was used by Indonesia's Minister of Education and Culture, Fuad Hasan in the sense of "various distinctive matters or regional characteristics, namely various skills and traditional craft-work, and also various regional cultural manifestations, such as language, regional writing, legends, and customary regulations" ("*Muatan Lokal Kurikulum SD Akrabkan Anak-Lingkungan*", [Local Content in the Elementary School Curriculum Making Friends between the Children and the Environment], in *Kompas* (daily newspaper), July 14, 1987, p. 1).

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4. The Batakmission strongly emphasized the inclusion of religious lessons and activities in the curriculum of its schools. Its objective was not merely to attract the interest of the pupils in accepting Christianity in a formal way through baptism because as a matter of fact most of its pupils had already been baptized, but rather in order to form Christian character in harmony with the Batakmission's understanding of Christian character, namely piety, honesty, industry, diligence, orderliness, discipline, having a preference for peace, etc. In other words, for the Batakmission, education was not just a matter of communicating knowledge and skills, but also, and primarily, the planting of moral and spiritual values in the pupils within the framework of character formation (*Charakterbildung*). Admittedly, there were persons who did not agree with this objective and the methods used to attain it, but that is another issue, which will not be discussed here.

5. The Batakmission succeeded in bringing about growth in the Batak Christians' interest in becoming teachers. The stringent selection process and system of teacher education strongly emphasized a high degree of discipline. In general, this resulted in Batakmission teachers being quality persons, in fact the best of the Batak sons. This evaluation in turn gave them a high and respected social status causing many Bataks to view the teaching profession as an ideal calling. The Batak people's appreciation and respect for "teachers of the community" (*Raja Patik*, for example, Chapter Two) during the pre-mission period was redirected to the teachers of the Batakmission as persons who had higher and more perfect power and sacred knowledge (*sahala parbinotoan*). As a result, beginning with the Batakmission era until the following period, Batak interest in becoming teachers remained very high. This is the reason why we continue to meet many Batak teachers in almost the entire archipelago.

This fact has of course invited criticism, namely that the Batakmission was so enthusiastic about planting, encouraging and bringing about an understanding in the community about the high status and value of the teaching office that Bataks centred their ideals and goals on becoming teachers while at the same time showing a lack of appreciation and interest in other professions and intellectual categories. The critics saw this as one of the main reasons why

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only a few Bataks became doctors, engineers, lawyers, etc., during the mission period.⁴¹ However, we can not fully accept that criticism. First of all, the schools of higher education which educated the professionals and the granting of masters' degrees were not available until the 1920s (cf. Chapter One), and therefore such criticism is an anachronism. Secondly, before the arrival of the Batakmission, Bataks already had great respect for the teaching profession. Thirdly, the Batakmission also developed highschoools for the development of skills other than teaching, such as the Trade School, but at first it was just the Bataks themselves who lacked interest in learning other skills. Fourthly, the Batakmission operated a number of schools using the Dutch language which opened opportunities for Batak young people to continue their education at a higher level even though this effort began at the instigation of the community and only became encouraged after 1910. Even so, we do agree that the Batakmission greatly emphasized the teaching profession, and this action very much influenced the interest and the value system embraced by the community.

After looking at the impact and contribution of the Batakmission's educational effort for the field of education and other fields in the Batak church and society as well as in wider areas, may we conclude that the Batakmission's system of education agreed with the situation, condition and needs of the community, particularly in the Batakland? Parallel to that, did the Batakmission's educational system provide the most appropriate alternative to supersede the educational system of traditional Batak society?

As we have already noted, many persons from mission circles, the government and the Batak society itself advanced various criticisms both during and after the time of the Batakmission's work. There is no need for us to repeat those here. If we share those criticisms, then we must conclude that the Batakmission's system of education had many flaws related to goal, content, method, organization, quality of teachers, quality of physical facilities and equipment, etc.

Nevertheless we must firmly state here that we do not evaluate the Batakmission's effort or system of education through making general statements; we must see its effort from various sides and fields. We must also remember that the Batakmission's system of education was not something static or established. As we have seen throughout this analysis, the Batakmission was continually trying to develop as well as to correct its educational system after listening to criticisms and

⁴¹ This was the criticism of Simatupang and Panggabean, members of the church council of the Bandung congregation of the Indonesian Christian Protestant Church (GKPI) in Bandung in a discussion held on August 17, 1987 (Indonesia's Independence Day).

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suggestions both from without and within and after learning from the development and progress in the field of education from the wider environment, even though particular principles were firmly maintained.

An evaluation of the success or failure of the Batakmission's educational system ought not be based just on the situation, condition and needs of the community, but also on the goals which the Batakmission itself had defined. Viewed from the perspective of the goals which the Batakmission had specified, as noted in section A of this chapter, the Batakmission's educational endeavour resulted in positive impacts on the Batak church and society. In other words, seen from the goals which it had defined, and from various positive results from its educational work, most of that educational system was in harmony with the needs of the Batak church and society. If we or other critics do not agree with the Batakmission's educational goals, then that becomes another issue.

Certainly there were failures to achieve all of its goals, namely the Batakmission did not fully achieve the formation of an autonomous Batak church, especially in the matter of autonomy in ministry and leaders. We have already put forth our analysis and criticisms with reference to this matter, and this will be completed in Chapter Nine. In the meantime, we are able to say that with all of its shortcomings, the Batakmission achieved much in advancing education particularly in the Batakland, and in Indonesia in general.