

Chapter II
ESTABLISHMENT OF METHODIST CHURCH IN BARODA



The Centenary Methodist Church Fatehgunj, Baroda

The place of congregation is quite important for the growth and development of any community of believers or of any religious organization. In the case of Christians the 'Church' or 'Chapel' has played a pivotal role in consolidating the sense of 'brotherhood' and 'Community'. When the first Church came into existence the term 'Catholic Church' literally meant the church of Universe or Universal Church. It was supposedly above to particular and caste race the narrow distinctions of class, caste, ethnic, race or nation. Yet the local, regional, and territorial manifestations cannot be denied at any given point of time. At the dawn of

the nineteenth century, Christianity had been present in India continuously for many centuries.¹

According to the most accepted tradition, St. Thomas, a disciple of Jesus Christ came to India in the first century and founded church on the west coast and later on the east coast. The Nestorian, Syrian and Coptic churches came with the Gospel of Christ before the modern mission movement. In 1706, two Danish Missionaries Ziegenbalg and Plütze came to south India. In 1793 William Carey came to India through the Baptist Missionary Society.²

With the beginnings of political control of key part and coastal territories of Gujarat by the company operations in the second half of the 18th century, the presence of the Europeans personnel necessitated the establishment of Christian institutions especially the chapel services.

C.C. Aratoon the first Protestant missionary in Gujarat established a church at Surat spread the Gospel so he started his work in Surat. In 1821, he came to Baroda where he started established Mahi Kantha Mission.³ Around the same time the London Missionary Society had started its work in Gujarat. Skinner and Fyvie, the LMS missionaries, came to Gujarat in Surat in 1815 and started translation work in consultation with William Carey.⁴ They also started working with Mr. C.C Aratoon in Surat. During that time there was no proper arrangement of Chaplain for the British army personals in India.

An Irish Presbyterian Missionary came to the west coast of Gujarat in 1841. Lazrus Tejpal reports that Irish Presbyterian church started its

¹ Solomon Doraiswamy, *Christianity in India: Unique and Universal Mission*, Madras, 1986 p.3.

² Domnik David Israel, *A Missiological Evaluation of the Methodist Church in Gujarat during the period of 1921-1997*, Fuller Theological seminary, U.S.A. 1989, Page 19

³ Christopher Christie and Nimrod Christian, *Methodist Church Souvenir, Centenary of Methodist Church Building, 1880-1980*, Vadodara, p.2.

⁴ Domnik David Israel, *op.cit.* p. 19

work in the central Gujarat from Jambusar in 1848. In order to cover more fields in Gujarat, London Missionary Society gave its work to Methodist Mission in 1848 and William Taylor started Methodist Missionary work in Baroda in 1872.

An Irish Church historian, Robion Boyd writes that the Salvation Army came to Gujarat in 1882, Brethren Church in 1895, the Christian and Missionary Alliance in 1893, and the Wesleyan Methodist in 1910. The church in Gujarat was born from the peoples Movement. According to Duncan Forester the people's movement began in the 1870s and continued until 1920. The result was that there were about 20,000 Christians in Gujarat in 1905.⁵

Work of the London Missionary Society

The London Missionary Society was founded in 1795. The very first paper presented to the society in 1795 suggested Surat as a desirable place for setting up a mission station in India, but no immediate action was taken.⁶ In 1815 the LMS began work in Gujarat the pioneer missionaries of the LMS were Rev. William Fyvie of Aberdeen and the Rev. James Skinner of Bristol. Skinner was the first to reach Surat. On his arrival on 16th Sept, 1815 he was welcomed by Aratoon an Armenian convert associated with the Baptist missionaries of Serampore. They immediately began the task of learning the Gujarati language. As soon as they had gained some proficiency of the language they began the work of translating the scriptures.⁷

In addition to translating the Bible, the missionaries prepared 31 tracts containing between 8 and 16 pages each and a small catechism.⁸ The

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 20

⁶ Letter of William Fyvie dated 20 Nov. 1818, in LMS records GUST Archives, Ahmadabad.

⁷ *London Missionary Society, Official Report for 1815, GUST-Archives*

⁸ *Ibid.*



report for 1821 says that places for worship had been opened in various parts of Surat where the brethren regularly addressed the people.

The missionaries did not confine themselves with in Surat as they undertook series of tours of other parts of Gujarat. On one such Journey to in 1829, Fyvie baptized 2 women and one child. Encouraged by this response Fyvie and his family he left Surat in 1830 to establish an outpost at Kaira where they remained for two years.⁹

Skinner and Fyvie, the missionaries of London Missionary society, started working with Mr. C. C. Aratoon in Surat. During that time, there was no proper arrangement of Chaplin for British army in India. Due to great increase in the number of soldiers, in Gujarat Surat came in Thomas John Rocklin in Kheda and the first Chaplin of Baroda was appointed in 1818. Arch Deacon George Barnesh built churches at Kaira, Surat and Baroda (St. James Church) which were inaugurated by Rainold Heber in 1825.¹⁰ Heber was Bishop at Calcutta and he has recorded his visit to Gujarat in March-April 1825 when he inaugurated the St. James Church Baroda in his journal.¹¹

Mr. Antone who emerged as the pillar of Baroda mission carries an interesting story. In 1806, during the time of famine and stress one Maratha family wanted to sell their boy to a retired British soldier at Nagpur. The six year boy was given the name the Henry Antone. The boy Antone was educated and became teacher in the Christian school at Nagpur. One day he came in contact with Serampore's Baptist missionaries. He became a very enthusiastic Christian and started working with Nagpur British Residency's clerk. In 1844, he came to Baroda from where he corresponded with Mr. Clarkson at Surat and received some tracts. During

⁹ LMS. *Official Reports: 1828-1832.*

¹⁰ Lincan M. Desai., *Girdharbhai Muljibhai Smruti Granth*, Ahmedabad, 1979, p. 5

¹¹ Christopher Christie and Nimrod Christian, *op.cit.*, p.2.

holidays and on Sundays he started spreading tracts in nearby villages as he learnt Gujarati very well.¹²

Antone used to invite people at his home and taught them Christian faith. Many of them received tract and gospel from Antone and became cherishing for an example, one Gangaram Dayaljibhai received baptism and soon joined the in the missionaries preaching work.¹³ Another person to become Christian was Girdher Rupji from Aanklav (through Mr. Antone) who went to meet Mr. Clarkson for getting baptism. Looking at Antone's enthusiastic work Rev. Clarkson decided to leave Surat and came to Baroda.

Mr. Antone had prepared some interested people for baptism and on 24th November 1844 Clarkson baptized 8 persons from Dehavn including Girdherbhai, Kuberbhai and Ramdas within a year Rev. Clarkson had baptized 56 adult persons which were considered a remarkable event in the history of Gujarat by the missionaries. In the same year Baroda's Resident Ortrim donated 12 bighas of land to the missionaries.¹⁴

During this time the famous missionary and lyricist Rev. J. V. S. Taylor came to Baroda in 1846. He started working with Rev. Clarkson. There was small gradual increase in Christian population¹⁵. Most of the new converts lived in nearby villages and came to Baroda to attend the worship services.¹⁶

This success story invited opposition from the upper caste Hindus. Within one year of Rev. Clarkson's work, Baroda mission had 70 members and some of them were from Patidar and Bania upper castes. Boyd notes

¹² Rev. Dr. Robin Boyd, *A Church History of Gujarat*, The Christian Literature Society, Madras, 1981 p.41.

¹³ Christopher Christie and Nimrod Christian *op. cit.*, p. 3

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 4-5.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 5

¹⁶ Ithiel V. Master, *A History of the Methodist Church in Gujarat*, Kentucky, 1954, p. 2.

that as the mission grew and as soon as the people converted to Christianity, the caste Hindus started harassment to newly convert to Christianity especially those who converted from the higher castes. They were not allowed to fetch water from the public wells. Wives left their husbands and children were taken away from their parents. Reverend Clarkson and Taylor had started one school which was closed within 15 days One newly converts was put into prison by his brothers tearing that if they will not take any decision. They will be ostracized by their caste people.¹⁷

Despite this opposition Rev. Clarkson built houses in Baroda and time expanded his work on Borsad and Cambay. Newly converts from this area were in need of worship place. He applied to the Kaira Collector in 1847 and received Khagiwadi where he built bungalow and five houses. The first few converts to Christians who were staying with Rev. Clarkson in Baroda were sent to Borsad to live in the newly courted houses. Thus, Baroda mission contributed in the development of Borsad mission.¹⁸

As the opposition grew stronger the London Missionary Society withdrew from the Baroda and handed over the work to the Irish Presbyterian Mission. The later mission worked for 12 years in Baroda but even they relinquished their claim and handed over their some for the dedicated workers to William Taylor, a missionary evangelist of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Baroda in 1872.¹⁹ Among the workers given over to the Methodist Episcopal Mission were Narottamdas and his 3 sons Henrybhai, Eliyasbhai and Benjaminbhai.²⁰

¹⁷ Robin Boyd, *op.cit.* p. 49.

¹⁸ Christopher Christie and Nimrod Christian, *op.cit.* p. 5-6.

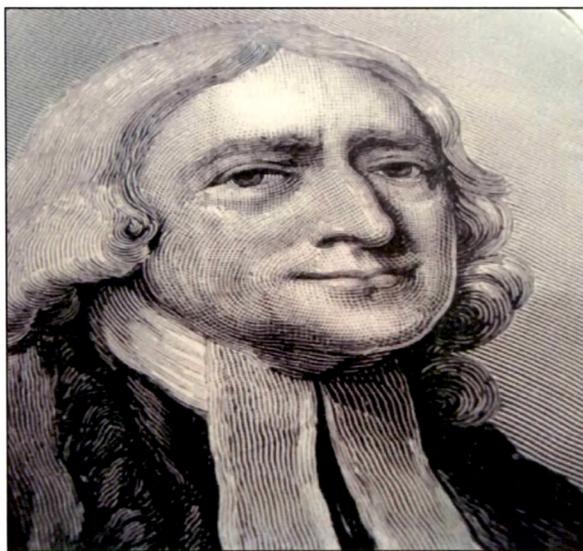
¹⁹ B.T. Badley, *Visions and Victories in Hindustan* Vol. II, 1931, p. 711

²⁰ Ithiel V. Master, *op.cit.* p. 2.

Methodist

The name 'Methodist' was given to the early followers of John Wesley, a minister in England in the eighteenth century who was thoroughly dissatisfied with the lack of spirituality among the clergy and in the church of his time. Wesley and his friends in The Oxford University were called "Methodists". Because each member of the new group organized his devotional life along very methodical and systematic lines, each member holding his time and his talents for the single purpose of Christian service.²¹

Thus, the Methodist church saw its origins in the eighteenth century in the work of John Wesley (1703-91), an Anglican clergy man whose spiritual awakening in 1738 made him the leader of a great revival movement which swept through England.²²



Rev. John Wesley

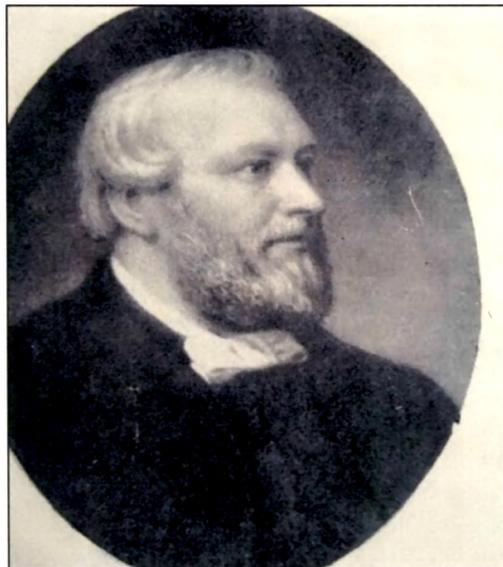
In America a separate Methodist church was organized earlier than in England as Anglican ordination was impossible for ministers of the

²¹ Frederic B. Fisher and Walter Books Foley- 'Building the Indian church', 1930 p. 9

²² J. N. Hollister, *The Centenary of the Methodist Church in Southern Asia*, 1956, p. 8

young church in America. Wesley commissioned Dr. Thomas Coke as superintendent for the Methodist societies in America and church was organized along Episcopal lines in 1784. This was the church which initiated work in Gujarat in 1872.²³

The Indian mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church was begun in Bareilly, U.P. in 1856 by Butler, our Irish Methodist Minister who a few years earlier had immigrated to America. Fourteen years later, in November 1870, a leading international preacher and evangelist of the Methodist church, William Taylor, arrived in Bombay and began to conduct preaching missions in various parts of India.²⁴



Rev. William Butler

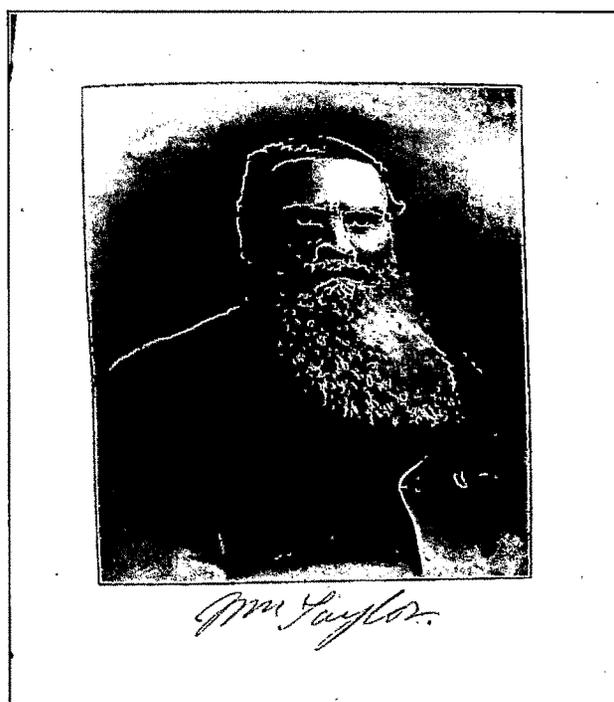
Origin and work of Methodist mission

When Irish Presbyterian mission was actively working in Gujarat many British army officers of the Residency were preaching in Baroda. From 1869, Methodist missionaries and Evangelists started visiting and working in Baroda. It was during that time, that two of Gaekwad's army

²³ *Ibid.* p.10

²⁴ Ithiel V. Master, *op.cit.* p. 56

officers Leen and Wilcox were touched by the message of famous evangelist William Taylor and became true Christians.²⁵ Soon after engineer Garmet's gardener Mr. Dhanjibhai accepted Christianity and other Gujaratis were also attracted towards Christ through English worship service. Motibai, Dhanjibhai Laljibhai and their children were the first Christian family in Baroda. Later children of this family, Rev. Gangubhai, Rev. Yusuf Dhanjibhai & Rev. Yakubbhai Dhanjibhai became the pioneer religious leaders who served the Methodist Church and the society throughout their life.²⁶



While William Taylor was in Baroda he was visited by J. V. S Taylor, An I. P. Missionary. In friendly consultation, together they decided that the Methodist Church should take over the Baroda area. The Mahi River was to be the boundary, the Methodist working to the south of it and the Irish Presbyterians to the North-J. V. S Taylor asked one of the I. P. Mission

²⁵Christopher Christie and Nimrod Christian *op.cit.*,p.7

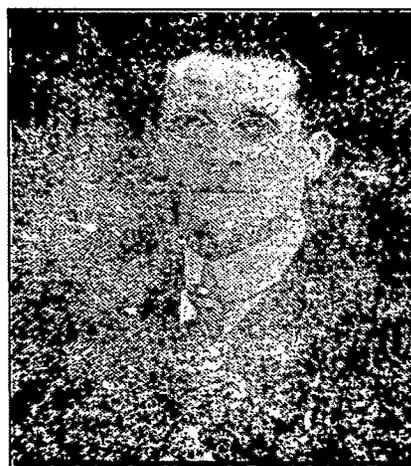
²⁶*Ibid*, p.8 &Rev. Theophil G. Gohil, *The Baroda Methodist church, annual report 1974*, (Centenary Report 1873-1974) p. 5

worker, Narottamdas Trikamdas, to stay in Baroda and help in the establishment of the Methodist work. He remained there permanently along with his two sons, Eliya and Henry. All these three gave outstanding leadership in the Methodist church. Rev. Narottamdas Trikamdas was the first Methodist pastor in Baroda. Coming from bania family of Surat, he had suffered very strong persecution. But he remained faithful to his new religion. Various Methodist missionaries from other parts of India visited Baroda group and the work grew and prospered.²⁷

Newly converts into Christianity and the British army officers in Gaekwad's army made serious efforts to erect the church. They availed the land from the Residency and in 1880 the first church was erected on the site of the present Methodist Church. In 1900-1902, the church was expanded. At that time whole Fatehgunj area was known as cantonment camp. As there was Residency bungalow the area also came to be known as Residency Area. Sayajirao Gaekwar, Maharaja donated 500 rupees (Silver coins) for the church building expense.²⁸



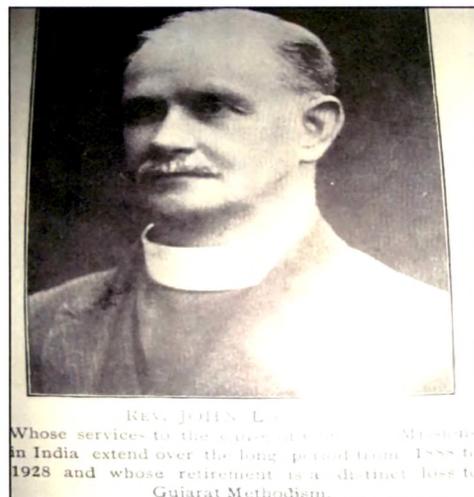
Rev. & Mrs. Conely



Rev. Linzell

²⁷ B.T. Badley, *Visions and Victories in Hindustan*, P. 717, Vol. II, Madras, 1931

²⁸ Christopher Christie and Nimrod Christian *op.cit.*, p.8



Delamater was officially the first missionary sent by the Methodist church to Baroda in 1888. Because of his sickness, he had to go back to USA. Frease, the second missionary, came with his family and started an evangelistic work in villages. Miss Thomson came along with Frease to Baroda and started school for girls while Miss Dr. Ernsberger started medical work in Baroda. Other missionaries were Rev. J. Lampard, Rev. Linzell, Rev. R. D. Bibee, Rev. C. H. Conley, and Rev. L. G. Templine. They brought along with them 3 huge metallic bells for church. These missionaries were sponsored by Women Missionary Society for Foreign Mission.²⁹

Though the first efforts of the newly appointed missionaries seem to have been directed towards evangelization but students for the various schools and patients for the dispensary were also secured. The doctor is said to have devoted her whole time at first to visiting the Baroda city and surrounding villages and then also to teaching the story of Christ along with her medical service.

For missionary administrative purposes, the work in Baroda remained a part of the Bombay district from 1888 until 1895. The fourth session of the Bombay Conference (1895) separated the work in Gujarat from the Bombay district by creating Gujarat district. The Gujarat district of

²⁹ Domnik David Israel, *op.cit.* P. 26

1895 became the Gujarat Conference in 1921 at the thirteenth session of the Bombay Conference.³⁰

The evangelistic work of the Methodist Church at Baroda was conducted by means of pastors-teachers and women teachers and Bible-women supervised by the District Superintendent and by the evangelists representing the Women's Foreign Missionary Society.³¹



An Indian Home, the Family, and the Bible-Woman at Work

In 1896, Baroda circuit had 2 local preachers, 2 exhorters, 7 pastor teachers, 7 Bible women and 2 teachers. In 1930, there were 42 local preachers, 57 Bible women and 102 teachers 30 of whom were trained, 42 schools under the Board of Foreign Missions and 3 supported by the Women's Foreign Missionary Society.³²

³⁰ B. T. Badley, *op.cit.*, p.712.

³¹ B. T. Badley, *op.cit.*, pp.712-713.

³² *Ibid*, p.713.



"At the Receipt of Custom", Hearing the Message.

As District Superintendents, many missionaries contributed to the success of the work. Prominent among these are the Rev. L. E. and Mrs. Linzell, Rev. John and Mrs. Lampard, and Rev. R. D. and Mrs. Bisbee. The representatives of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society those who were Miss Morgan, M. G. Bailey, Helen Robinson, L. E. Austin and L. A. Heist. Without the help of local men and women their efforts would have been useless.

Rev. E. F. Frease seems to have been a man of vision. The foundation laid by him and his general plan for developing the work have stood the test of time in many area. In 1889, two schools were opened by Rev. Frease in Baroda, one for boys and one for girls. These were both boarding and day schools combined. In the beginning, the girls were only three in number. The famine of 1900-1901 filled both the boys and girls schools. The hostel buildings for both schools were erected during the famine of 1900 and 1901 and provided work for many people who otherwise may have been unable to buy food. Famine relief was given to the weak and employment given to the able bodied. At the same time, a

home was prepared for the helpless orphans left to the care of the missionaries.³³

In 1889, Dr. Miss Ernsberger opened work in Baroda. In 1906 land was bought in the camp area for a hospital and in 1910 the Mrs. William Butler Memorial Hospital for women was opened. A Nurses Training School was linked with the hospital.³⁴ As the first mass -movement in the Methodist Church began in 1895 evangelistic opportunity need more missionaries.

A. A. Parker arrived in 1905 to take up this work as principal and on 9th March 1906 the new building the Florence B. Nicholson School of Theology was opened in Baroda. In the very first class thirteen men and two women enrolled for the training. It was interesting to note that the first 'Dean' of the school was a Muslim Khoja convert from Teheran, Rev. Imam Bax Bawa. He came to Baroda from Poona, where he was a member of the Marathi Church.³⁵

In 1912 and 1928 India, Shree Lanka, and Burma's Central Conference (Present General conference) was held in this Fatehgunj Methodist church Baroda. In 1928, Punjabi Saint Sadhu Sunder Singh conducted the meetings in this church. At that time large number of people gathered in this church to listen his message.

During the heavy floods of 1927 the Fatehgunj Methodist Church was not affected. Many people took refuge in this church and saved their lives. In 1929, parsonage was built in the church. The first pastor was started staying in this parsonage was Pastor Rev. Tulsibhai Govindbhai the

³³B.T. Badley, *op.cit.* p.714

³⁴*Ibid*, p. 717

³⁵ Robin Boyd, *op.cit.*, P. 112, 113

great speaker Bishop. J. M. Pickett conducted spiritual messages for one week and he opened up for the first time the name plate of Rev. Mr. Frease.



In 1980, church's Golden jubilee was celebrated when Rev. Nimrod Christian was its pastor. With the permission of Church Pastorate Committee, this church was given the new name of 'Centenary Methodist Church'. From archaeological point of view, the Methodist Church of Baroda is outstanding. Seeing from the plane or from the church's minarets one finds that this church is in cross shape. That's why wings were kept both the right and left side of the pulpit board on the church shows a list of 24 different pastors were served this church.³⁶



³⁶ *Gujarat Regional Conference Souvenir, Methodist Church in India, Godhara, 1997.* (Note: Page number are not written in this souvenir)

Holistic Approach of Missionaries

The missionaries accepted the tripartite understanding of the mass of body, soul and spirit each aspect having its need. This concept is found in the method of healing, teaching and preaching as Badley writes:

“The fascinating story of the missionary work in Gujarat has been one of gradual progress in its departments of healing, teaching and preaching. There were about 400 primary schools, two hospitals and 700 Sunday schools. There were about 800 primary school teachers, 362 pastors and evangelists and about 110 medical staff. This approach was fruitful”.³⁷



The Foundation Stone



Centenary Methodist Church, Fatehgunj, Baroda

³⁷ As cited in Domnik Israel, p. 56, 57.

MEANS AND METHODS USED BY THE METHODIST CHURCH

Karsan and another person from Gujarat were baptized at Bombay in 1888. They came back to their village and shared their testimonies that how their self esteem and confidence had been enhanced after becoming Christian. These testimonies touched the hearts of many people. As a result, many were ready to take baptism. This increasing eagerness made Bishops Fross and John Gaucher to come to Gujarat and they held a large Public meeting at Bhalej as arranged by Frease and for the first time as many as 300 were converted and baptized. Frease recorded that by the end of the year there were six hundred and two baptisms. Thus was the mass movement of conversion inaugurated.³⁸



Bishop B. T. Badley

Bishop Badley wrote that two or three families of sweepers were baptized in 1901 and then followed the baptism of groups of Dheds, 300 at one time and 600 at another, thus in a few months thousands were gathered into church. Park reported that in a number of villages almost the

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 34

entire Dhed population became Christian while. Harper wrote: "the largest number of baptism i.e. 6,291, persons received baptism in 1901".³⁹

Hollister writes, "Before conference J. E. Robinsons and Bishop Thoburn attended a one day Mela at Bhalej over 400 Christians were present and others numbered more than three hundred. The Bishop baptized 42 persons that day and administered the sacrament to over 200 person of whom many had never communed. During Christian Mela the gospel and Christian teachings are given. It had good impact on people Ravikant master quotes from one missionary about the impact of Christian Mela, "In 1929, 40 families break away from all caste connections and heathen customs. The churches in the villages, conducted Christian Mela once in a year. After 1970, Christian melas have been reduced."⁴⁰

Special Month of Aggressive Evangelism

Virji Khoja writes: "During 1905-1907 mass movements took place at all missions' stations; there was awakening and influx of people into Christianity. In order to continue this awakening and influx of people Bishops and district superintendents made resolution that during 15 Feb. and 15 March i.e. one month, each Methodist church of India should have evangelistic outreach to non-Christian community".⁴¹

Summer Night Meetings

This is an outreach program for churches. This is very much social in its approach. The pastor encourages the heads of the families or leaders of the society to organize night meetings during the summer especially during the month of May. During the hot season, people in the villages leisurely lie down or sit outside their houses to avoid heat in the night when they were willing to listen to the preaching of the gospel and Christian songs.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p.35.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.35- 36.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 36.

Gaayan Tolies were organized singing bands. This was kind of entertainment for non-Christians in the rural areas. Gaayan Tolies dispersed Christian message through Indian music and bhajans. Young men were encouraged to participate in this service for evangelism. The Gaayan Toli continued to be active during the period between 1930 and 1950.⁴²

The teachers were in the schools acted as important vehicles for Christian teaching. Some of these teachers were pastors as well. Efforts were made to create a religious atmosphere in the schools. The district superintendent Conley says, "No doubt the most fruitful evangelistic work is that which is carried on throughout the year among the children especially those attending the schools and Sunday school.

Colportage was an effective a method of evangelism through literature. Important parts of the Bible and Christian literature were distributed free while Bibles and Christian Books were sold at nominal prices. Gujarat Conference had appointed a full time coordinator for this program.

According to the Journals of the Gujarat Conference of 1922 and 1924, 543 and 573 persons were baptized respectively conversions to Christianity has made a change in the social attitudes. Child marriages were reduced and more girls come forward to join the Christian schools.⁴³

Methods Applied during 1950-1970

The Church started celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ by organizing Carol singing programs in different parts of the cities. The church choir used to go for carol singing from home to home to the members residences. Members of the church also used to invite their non-

⁴² *Ibid.* P. 37

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 38

Christian friends. The urban members of the churches used to evangelize in the nearby villages. The local church would send a team on weekends to these villages. During the 50's members of the urban churches used also cycles for evangelistic work in the countryside. The churches also availed the an opportunity to present the gospel of Jesus Christ on All India Radio under the banner of celebration of Christian festivals like Christmas and Easter..⁴⁴

Methods Applied during 1970-1980

The local urban church adopted one or two village churches and sent lay volunteers to conduct Sunday schools, vacation Bible schools and Seminars or Retreats. The Baroda Church was actively involved in this expansion program.

Camp and Retreat is an imitation of Western Evangelistic Approach, inviting genuine seekers of the gospel to one place for a day or two days. During the retreat, Christian message and teaching are interpreted and explained.⁴⁵ Hollister writes, "It was Gujarat's good fortune that medical and evangelistic work opened together."⁴⁶

The history of Christianity witnessed a large group of lower castes and untouchable people flocking Christianity. This kind of is described as Mass-Movement of Dalits, the oppressed classes and tribes.⁴⁷

The mass movement in Gujarat was mainly engineered by the Methodist Church during the period between 1889 and 1905 The mass conversion occurred mainly due to the famines of 1889 to 1903 as Bishop Badley reported "Two or three families of Sweepers were baptized in 1901

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 40- 41

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁴⁷ Sudhirshiraj Nelson, *Religious and Socio-Political Interaction in India*, N.S.K. Pub: Napear Town, Jabalpur, pp. 120-122

and then followed the baptism of groups of Dheds, 300 at one time and 600 at another, thus, in a few months thousands were gathered up to church". Harper gives exact figures of mass conversion. "The largest number of baptism i.e. 6,291 persons received baptism in 1901".

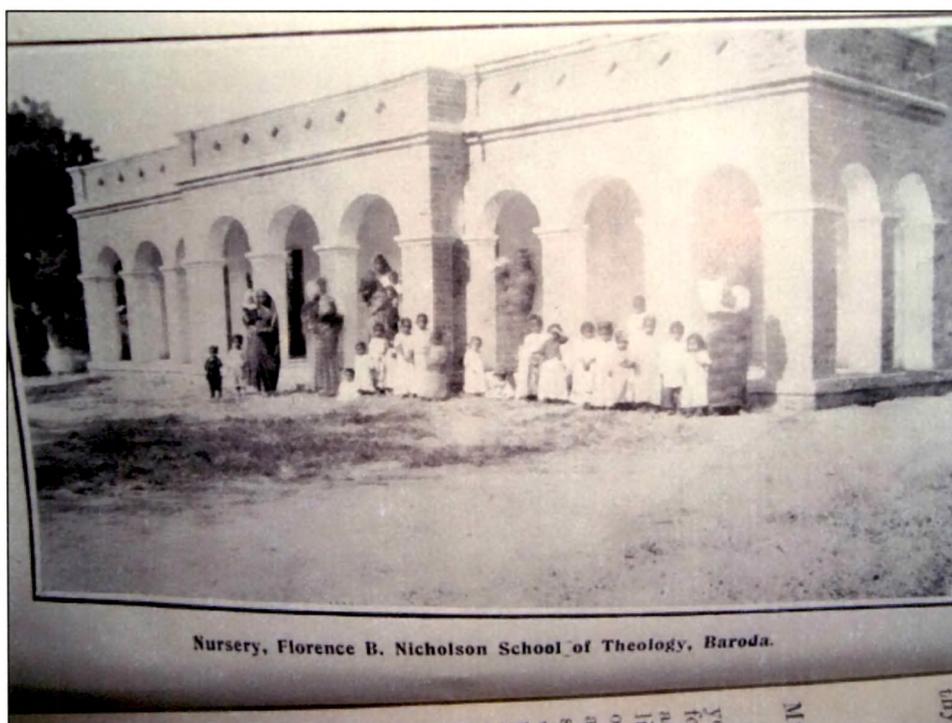
Because of the people movements, there was great growth and expansion of the church as reflected in the progressive increase in the decade. In 1895, membership 602, stood at while in 1900, it grew to 5,321. In 1903 the Church membership touched 16,000, in 1905 moved up to 19,000 and in 1906 reaching 22,000.⁴⁸ There was very little Christian background and there were no teacher to instruct them. Rev. E. F. Frease organized a training class in 1896 and selected the brightest from among the young converts for this class. These students were given Christian teaching, both theoretical and practical, and were sent out to teach their brethren in the villages. These were the first local pastor teachers.

Many of them were married to girls who had been trained in the girl's school. There became the Bible women. Soon Bishop Thoburn was instrumental in getting the Theological School started in the beginning of the twentieth century. Rev. A. A. Parker and Mrs. Parker were the first missionaries appointed to the school of theology. They arrived in February, 1905 and the theological school building was dedicated March 9, 1906. The mission workers department was opened in July and the first class was enrolled in the Theological school in November of the same year Parkers were succeeded by Rev. and Mrs. R.D. Bisbee, Rev. and Mrs. F. Wood, Rev. and Mrs. L. E. Linzell, Rev. and Mrs. J. Lampard. Mass movement in Gujarat was remarkable terms of expansion of missionary activities during and after the time of famine.

In 1921, 1200 persons were converted in Baroda district and in 1922; there were 1,000 conversions among Kolis and Baniyas in the district. The

⁴⁸Domnik Israel, *op.cit.* pp. 34-35.

distressing time made the missionary to found dispensaries, hospitals, orphanages, schools nurse's training school and other institution.⁴⁹



In the year 1905, a great tragedy was casting its pall of death over Gujarat. The recrudescence of plague, rapidly assumed a more virulent form. It was a hideous march of the grim destroyer.

The 1905 report records grimly that in one town where the register gave a little under 100 Christians, nearly 40 had been taken and in many places one out of every three whole families had been blotted out, the simple houses standing deserted and silent remainders of the tragedy and only a few of the families were spared of the deathful tragedy.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ithiel V. Master *op.cit.*, pp.21,26.

⁵⁰ *Annual Report and Minutes of the Bombay Women's Missionary Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 1905, Poona, Bombay, Methodist Publishing House. 1905, P. 36.

Practically five years of successive drought spells could be known only from actual contact with the resulting conditions. No wonder that a panic seized the people of Gujarat when in 1905 very scanty late rain did not replenish the tanks and wells. The underground water level of the province had dropped about ten feet and only a succession of full monsoons would bring it up again. Rev. Edwin Frease said that in despair "Gujarat is today face to face with its greatest water famine and what the next months may bring forth no one can tell."⁵¹

The persecution of converted Christians was reported from different places during the 1906 year. There appeared to be a general impression that one reason why converts could be won easily from the depressed classes was that they could become Christians without breaking from their caste fellows socially. But actually the conversions led to loss of employment, social ostracism and danger of personal violence in many cases. At the time of writing the report in 1906, severe persecution was being endured by Christian converts in more than a half dozen places. It was felt that these cases should be taken up promptly and personally by the missionaries; but it was realized this could not be easily done since the missionaries were too few and not ubiquitous⁵²

The Shortage of missionaries was further aggravated in, 1909 by the deaths of Miss Curts, Arthur C. Parker and Mrs. Osborn. The two former were doing full missionary work and their deaths made two vacant places difficult to be filled. For some years Miss Curts had been in charge of the Girls Orphanage at Godhra. Brother A. C. Parker was one of the most promising young men who had ever come to the Bombay Conference. He had charge of the Baroda Boy's Orphanage and had been in India but a year and a half.

⁵¹ *B.W.C.R.M. 1905* p. 37.

⁵² *B.A.C.M. 1906*, Bombay, Methodist Publishing House, Bombay, 1906, p. 54.

In the south of Baroda the missionary work had gone quietly in one new village where a number had become Christians. In Kava they were securing a plot on which to build a small church and house. There Christians who numbered eleven families gave Rs. 9 in cash as a collection without asking. In the Savli circuit there were a number of villages owned by the petty chiefs called *thakurs*. In some of these villages the new converts had suffered a good deal of persecution during the year 1909. In one, such villages, the *thakur* forbade them to draw water from the river in copper vessels and to carry it through the streets home. He also forbade their women to wear *sarees* with yellow borders, because some of the high caste Hindu women wear such *sarees* for such was the fate of dalits the untouchables in Gujarat.⁵³

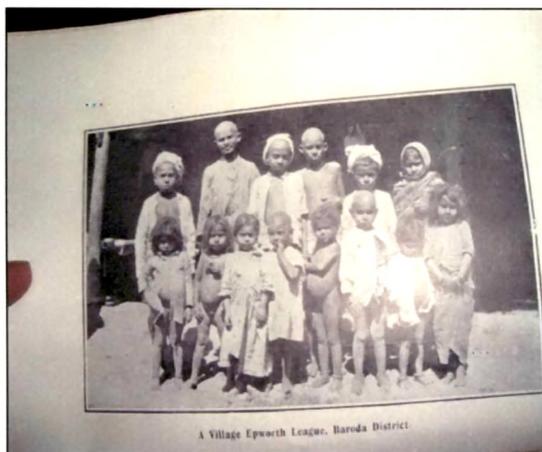
In the year 1910 the compulsory education which was being carried on in the Baroda state was providing a great boost to the missionaries' work. A large number of Christian children were under instruction in the Government schools. This had given impetus to their schools located in the British territory and their village schools were doing better work than ever before. A number of schools were being recognized and registered by government in 1910.

In the early part of the year at a meeting of the circuit evangelists the condition of the Christian children was discussed especially of those in the villages where their children were being taught in the Gaekwari schools. It was decided that something must be done to provide for their training in the Christian life. It was felt that some organization should be formed to do this work. The suggestion was made that the Epworth League

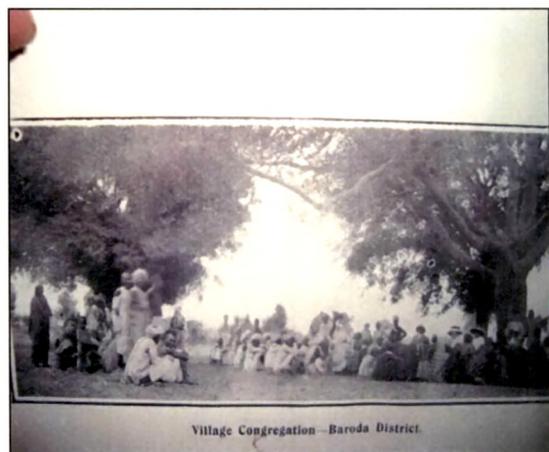
⁵³ B.W.C.R., 1909, Bombay, , Poona , 1909, pp. 60, 61.

would supply the need. In each circuit they then organized two or three chapters. In all 33 Village Leagues had been established and the systematic teaching of the Christian children was being carried on.

The village pastor had been teaching children and adults together in the village Sunday school. For the supervision of the Epworth League and Sunday School work they had appointed a district secretary.⁵⁴



A Village Epworth League, Baroda District



Village Congregation - Baroda District

The strength of the institutions of the church depended entirely upon the character of the village Christians and upon the growth of the work in the villages. They had in the district 10,312 Christians living in 390 villages. This work was divided into 18 circuits, the circuits into sub-circuits, the sub-circuits into charges and in each charge there were two or three villages.

During the year 1910 there had been 913 baptisms in the district, about half of there were children of Christians and the rest came from the Dhed, the Chandals and the Bhangis. Owing to the tenacity with which old customs cling to the people, the District Conference felt it to be to pass a rule in 1908 requiring every adult candidate for baptism to sign an

⁵⁴ *B.W.C.R.* , 1910, Nadiad ,Poona,1910 , pp. 60, 61.

undertaking to give up the custom of infant marriage. The result was that their baptisms were far less than would have been but many otherwise, families were keeping their children single until they reached maturity. During the year a number of Christian families were found who could not withstand the dictation of their relatives and in spite of their pledge they married their young children.

Inter-denominational rivalries emerged in the early twentieth century. In one part of the Baroda district the Roman Catholics were greatly embarrassing the work of Methodists through the bribery which they were using. The Catholics had forced three of their schools to close.

In some parts of the district the Catholics watched carefully and as soon as a birth occurs among Methodist Christians they set to work to persuade the families and when the child was a few days old they would come and carry off the child and its mother to their church. The Catholics would give the mother an outfit of clothes and baptize the child. It was converted in the report that when a family has to subsist on a few cents a day, a new sari and a few other articles of clothing form a strong inducement to the family to let the little one become a Roman Catholic. The Jesuit missionary was out there every week. On the other hand the Methodist Rev. L. E. Linzell was able to get there only once a year. It was further commented in the report that their whole work on that part of the district will be ruined unless a missionary could give close attention and much time to it.⁵⁵

Baroda city itself demanded one full fledged missionary during the year 1912. It was observed that there are fifty *mohullas* of the Dhed caste in the city and around. These people were most accessible to the influence of the gospel. Twelve of these *mohullas* had been visited regularly and new

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 1910, pp. 61-62.

ones, by the two or three Bible woman. About six homes of Mohammedans and high caste Hindus were visited regularly. A very intelligent Jain woman, whose sister was a Buddhist nun with a license to go all over the country preaching even to men, was a real inquirer who loved the Bible, would to sing Christian hymns and was learning the Methodist catechism at her own request.⁵⁶

Miss Bailey opened up a great deal of city work during the Monsoon when they were prevented from working out in the villages. She spent an hour a day in the Mrs. William Butler memorial Hospital and was several times surprised to find that her audience of the previous day assembled as patients, while she had been able to follow up by visits to their homes a few of the patients met in her hospital visits.

A pleasing feature of their work in the city in 1912 was a chance afforded them by Mrs. Tyabji to teach English in the largest government school for Urdu and Gujarati speaking to Muslim girls.

In 1912, the Baroda Woman's Missionary Society was organized in March by Mrs. Linzell. Most of their efforts had been to place the responsibility on the women themselves to make them more independent.⁵⁷

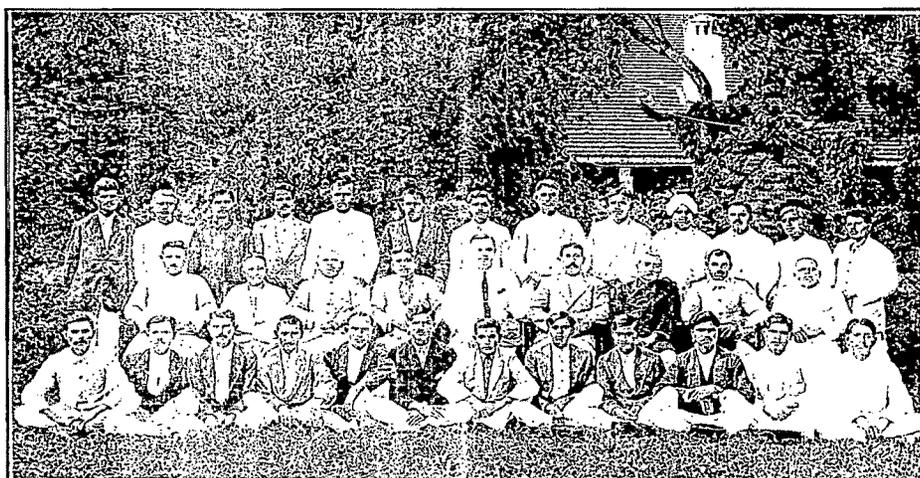
Miss Bailey, the Bible woman, enthusiastically moved to new areas and covered the Baroda and its surroundings for missionary work. Just on her rounds hundreds of children had memorized a scripture to get the little picture cards she would distribute. So eager were they to get the card that

⁵⁶ *B.W.C.R*, 1912, Baroda, P. 34, Mysore, Wesleyan Mission press, 1913.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 1912, p. 35.

even having to go home and bathe would not remove them from the exercise. One of the illustrations in the Report shows a crowd of people of all castes gathered to hear and see what went on while Mr. Linzell was holding a preliminary meeting at Padra village.⁵⁸

According to the 1913 report written by Miss. Cora Morgan, who had come back to work in Baroda in 1912, there had been much travelling to cover the large territory comprising in the Baroda District. The schools were being better organized with a school inspector appointed and the young people's work generally was being better looked after. Several Melas held during 1913 were well attended, bringing together not only large crowds of Christians but also large numbers of non-Christians of all castes. There was a large Christian Mela at Nadiad, attended by missionaries and Christians from all the missions working in Gujarat exhibiting a close bond of fellowship.⁵⁹



*Graduating class of Florence B. Nicholson School of Theology, Baroda
Students seated in front row; Dr. R. D. Bisbee, Principal, in centre
Rev. Ishwardas Narsinh, Vice-Principal, second to the right of Dr. Bisbee. The rest are
Preachers-in-charge of the Baroda district.*

With two of their men missionaries on furlough and the boy's orphanage without a missionary the task was a serious one for the missionaries in the

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 1912, p. 36.

⁵⁹ *B.W.C.R.*, 1913, poona, Mysore, Wesleyan Mission press, 1914, pp. 45-46.

year 1914. However, the majority of their Indian workers realizing the reduced staff of the missionaries had rendered service such as they had never done before.

That year 13 young preachers graduated from the Theological School from the total of sixty six graduates. The principal was ably assisted by Yusaf Dhanji, who had been the chief assistant in the school from its establishment years ago.

To attract enthusiasts from wider cross sections of society, Rev. L. E. Linzell had begun advertising over all Gujarat and Kathiawar, inviting all to come and pose their queries regarding Christian faith to visit him or to write to him. A few inquisitive Brahmins approached of with interesting enquirers. One of them with university degrees who was in a good Government position came stating that after being a secret disciple for years had decided to accept Christ openly by public baptism⁶⁰

The statistical report of 1913⁶¹ as given below gives an interesting account of progress of the missionaries.

Christians community	11,924
Baptisms in 1913	817
Preachers and exhorters	131
Bible women	100
Students in their schools	1,410
Sunday school scholars	5,936

In 1917, the missionaries suffered a great loss in the death of Miss Robinson who knew every part of Baroda city and spoke both Marathi and Gujarati languages fluently. The dedicated and tireless work by the missionaries obviously would exhaust some of them like Miss Robinson. To

⁶⁰ *B.W.C.R.*, 1913, Karachi, Mysore, Wesleyan Mission press, 1914 pp. 49-52.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1913, pp.52-53.

travels the countryside they made use of the railway; it was necessary to take the team and carriage all the way in order to visit the villages around the centres. In 1917, for example they visited village day schools and held meetings in twelve villages in five days. They lived in little village churches and in workers houses, ate their meals in railway stations, in the carriage and under trees on the way. They would hold meetings the whole day and were tired enough at the end to go to sleep anywhere.⁶²

In March 1918 R. D. Bisbee with his wife and daughter returned from their furlough in America and took charge of ten circuits on the northern half of the district. But soon they trouble began when plague visited the region unusual severity, and large numbers of people died. While the numbers of deaths in the district was 212 in 1917, it touched 1,062 in 1918. In a few weeks time the mission lost four men and twelve women workers. Besides, many children of workers had died and scarcely any had escaped sickness.

At the Annual conference of 1918 Bishop J. E. Robinson divided the Baroda district into two parts, forming a new district with head quarters at Godhra. Famine and high prices posed obstacles for the missionaries during the year 1919, but in spite of these hindrances achieved good progress. There was an increase of 10 village schools with 240 scholars during the year taking the total number of schools to 38 with 815 scholars. After their persistent effort for some years government sanctioned that year grants-in-aid to 8 of these schools.⁶³

The village boarding school at Vasad was reopened. There were 800 Baptisms during 1919 of which 476 were the new converts Work among the adivasi Naikdas that begun in the Jambughoda somewhere in

⁶² *Ibid.*, 1917, Bombay, Mysore, Wesleyan Mission press, pp. 11-12.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 1918, Baroda Camp, Mysore, Wesleyan Mission press, 1918, PP. 298 - 301.

1915 showed the missionaries a considerable success as there were 36 baptisms among the Adivasis.⁶⁴

The new work among the Gujarati's adivasis, viz. Bheels Kolees and others made further progress in 1920 with 134 baptisms. There were 175 Sunday schools with 5,966 in 1920 showing an increase of 11 schools and 201 scholars over last year. 12 new day schools with 337 pupils were added that year.⁶⁵

Despite missionaries work towards Christianization a vast majority of marriages among village Christians continued according to Hindu rites. The chief reason had been their practice of child marriage. This needed reform and accordingly one of their respected ministers, Harjivan Virabhai was appointed as social reform secretary. He travelled through over the district and by the establishment of small societies of right thinking people in different villages, by instruction in all village schools, by persuasion and by every possible means was endeavouring to lead the Christian converts to stop child marriages. Rev. L. E. Linzell, the District Superintendent of Baroda mentioned in his report of 1921 noted the development of the Christian church, its increased financial strength, the many healthy village schools, the enhanced strength of their Baroda High School, the large increase in the number of educated Christians and other improvements which had taken place during last seven years.⁶⁶

In the year 1922, an America missionary Rev. Lampard was carrying at a well arranged programme along with Miss Morgan to reaching out to women and girls throughout the Baroda district. In every village with Christian population, societies called Women's Helping Bands were organized to instruct the women and girls in the real meaning of the

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 1919. Poona, Mysore, Wesleyan Mission press, 1920, pp. 196-197.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 1920, Baroda, Mysore, Wesleyan Mission press, 1920, PP.2.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 1921, Bombay, Mysore, Wesleyan Mission press, 1921, pp. 155-158.

Christian life the missionaries realised that the future of the Christian church in Gujarat will depend on women's progress.

Rev. L. E. Linzell, strictly ordered the readers that they should not bring forth for baptism unworthy men and repeatedly cautioned them that those accepting baptism should give special and solemn pledges relating to child marriage. For such measures, many local preachers had to suffer persecution and derision especially those on the Dabhoi Jambughoda side.⁶⁷

Miss Morgan was working with the pastors and Bible women. She also worked among the high caste women in the villages among whom special meetings had been conducted. There was a great evidence in many places that the Christians were earnestly seeking to live a new leaving their old customs. The result of such efforts was that during 1923 there were 13 Christian marriages of Baroda district. This small figure of marriages indicates very clearly that the majority of the village Christians continued the marriages of their children according to the Hindu religious practices. Many earnest followers could still not muster the courage to defy the caste system and suffer the social ostracism.⁶⁸

An interesting facet of Christianity came to light in 1924-25. There was united district conference in Baroda when they had the well known and saintly Sadhu Sunder Singh for their devotional meetings. A great number of non-Christian men-Hindus, Muslim, Parsis, Brahmo Samajists and theosophists crowded in with the Christians to hear the Christian messages from the Sadhu. In Baroda district were quite a few members of the Sanyasi Christian movement, a secret Christian society composed of many high caste men who were secret Disciples of Christ who had

⁶⁷ *First Session of the Gujarat Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, (Report) Godhra, , 1922, Madras, Methodist Publishing House, 1922, p.37

⁶⁸ *G.A.C.R.*, 1923, Nadiad, Madras, Methodist Publishing House, 1923, p. 138.

announced their intention to come out openly as Christians as soon as their numbers reached a certain fixed critical numbers. At this time the Church was under the able pastorate of Virjibhai whose ministry was wide reaching and his work carried him to distant parts of the region.⁶⁹

In the year 1926, Mrs. and Mr. Bisbee arranged a preaching Hall and a Book Store in the Baroda city. The preaching hall and evangelistic work in city was put in the care of Rev. Whalji Kahndas while the book store was put in charge of Rev. Ramji Punjabhai.⁷⁰

In 1927 an extreme case of a religious zealot who used to abuse Christ and his followers becoming one himself was reported from the city. A 'holy man' called 'bhagat' did all he could to persecute the Christian workers. He used to interrupt the meetings and spent most of his time in preaching against Jesus Christ and Christianity. He would openly abuse the Christian workers on the Baroda railway station. It became so embarrassing for the station master who was himself a Hindu to castigate him saying that by such hostile attitude many Hindus would turn to Christianity. This retribution had a desired effect as the 'Bhagat' finally went to a Christian preacher argued with him and asked him to pray for him. Eventually he got convinced and became Christian.⁷¹

During the year 1929, the city evangelistic work was been carried on under the supervision of Miss Laura F. Austin Eight bible women in addition to the three workers wives were engaged to educate the women in Baroda. Two of them worked among Marathi women.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 1924-25, Baroda, Madras, Methodist Publishing House, 1925, p. 30.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 1926, Nadiad, Madras, Methodist Publishing House, 1927, p. 186.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 1927, Baroda, Madras, Methodist Publishing House, 1928, pp. 268-270.



The same year, Miss L. A. Heist took charge of the Bible women's work of the Baroda district and encouraged 51 Bible women to educate and instruct women and children in the villages.⁷²

An international preacher E. Stanley Jones came to Baroda in 1931 on the invitation of Rev. R.D. Bisbee and conducted meetings in the Maharaja Theatre. His lectures were so impressive that the theatre was filled night after night with high caste Hindus, Muslims and Parsis. The Maharaja, Sayajirao III himself was present in one meeting and ordered his officials to attend the meetings. Dr. Jones spoke on 'A working Philosophy of life' as the basis of 'The Sermon on the Mount'.⁷³

After Jones meetings many Non-Christians were found interested in hearing the Gospel message all over district. Some of the educated started visiting the Methodist Book Store in the Baroda city and one such young man from the upper caste home came forward and received baptism in 1933.⁷⁴

The enthusiastic workers and evangelists of Baroda church triggered by one's words started evangelistic campaign as they went from village to village to preach Gospel. Three hundred and fifty eight laymen took part in the Campaign covering hundreds of villages in 2255 meeting. 665 people gave pledges not to drink any kind of intoxicating liquors. But that also created anxieties in the villages and provoked hostile posters at a few places.

One person with his family wanted to accept Christianity and requested for a meeting at village Timbarva in the Kanam area. The Patidars of the village came to know about it and the man who invited them was badly beaten by them. The people of the whole street were order

⁷² *Ibid.* 1929, Nadiad, Madras, Methodist Publishing House, 1930, p. 28.

⁷³ *Ibid.* 1931, Godhra, Madras, Methodist Publishing House, 1932 p. 297.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 1933, Baroda, Lucknow, Methodist Publishing House, 1934 pp. 33-35.

strictly to drive missionaries out of the village. On missionaries not leaving immediately' they were attacked with weapons. On Rev. Gagubhai's assurance to leave their village the next day, there was some peace but tension continued throughout the night⁷⁵.

The 1934 Report acknowledged the tension generated by their work. It stated that while the spirit and the attitude of the people toward Christians were changing yet Baroda as a whole was not favourable to Christianity.

That spirit was reportedly represented by the Librarian in the children's room at the Public Library of Baroda who taught Balvadi a good children's paper but was unwilling to put it on the reading tables because it was edited by a missionary.⁷⁶

In the very beginning of 1936 four day's evangelistic program was conducted by Dr. E. Stanley Jones whose influence was felt throughout the district. The night meetings for Non-Christians deeply impressed many from various communities. The meetings of Dr. Stanley Jones were also arranged in the Baroda college auditorium. As the Maharaja had consented to preside over the first meeting, the missionaries were asked to transfer it to the Durbar Hall at the Palace.⁷⁷ The Hall was packed and several students were unable to find seats.

Reaching out to the general public, besides inviting influential personalities like Jones, the local preachers would also go to the Shukarvari, the Friday bazaar in Baroda to hold evangelistic meetings sometimes the influence of these meetings reached to far distant places.

⁷⁵*Ibid.* 1933, p. 29 and, *Khristi Bandhu*, Rev. Henry Narottam Das, Methodist Mandli Na Samachar, 1935, PP 84-86, Ahmadabad.

⁷⁶*Ibid.* 1934, Godhra, Lucknow Publishing House, 1935, p. 22.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 1936, Baroda, Lucknow Publishing House, 1937, p. 28

The English service made a distinct contribution to the church life of Baroda. Mrs. Conley had organized a choir of boys and girls and frequent song services were conducted. Some educated non-Christians were attracted towards English service.

A high caste Hindu youth who had been attending their English services reportedly wrote: "If there is any religion in which there is no distinction between high and low it is Christianity".⁷⁸

The missionaries had a well-worked calendar for the evangelical program. Each month a definite objective for intensive effort, in addition to the usual routine work was laid out. Evangelism needed two months of preparation for the field work and Christian education was carried on throughout the year, but one month special effort was concentrated on strengthening this work. During other periods emphasis was placed on Christianizing the social custom, adult education, the training of lay leaders, self support, temperance, village uplift and the overcoming of caste prejudice.

During the revival month of Feb. to March 15th, the work was carried on among both Christian and Non-Christian communities. In 1937 1,694 meetings were organized held in 657 villages with an estimated attendance of 60,000. 175 laymen gave voluntary service, helping by singing witnessing and exhorting. They would persuade the patient listeners and some of them would surely follow their pursuit. Other would be driven by reading the scripture. One such young high-caste Hindu 'enquirer', living in a monastery, was driven out for studying the New Testament. He wanted to become a Christian but had independent means of making a living.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 1936, pp. 29.

A place was found for him as a compositor in a printing press. Too often they found that enquirers were promoted by a desire for personal gain, and in asking for baptism would make it conditional on certain material gains. The report recorded that such inquirers were not accepted on such grounds.⁷⁹

The missionaries' evangelical intentions get a clean mention in the Report 1939. It states explicitly that the winning of individuals and groups to Christ the chief work of the church. Much of this was done in a quiet way through Christian teaching in their schools and Sunday schools, through Christian service in their hospitals and through earnest witnessing on the part of those with Christian experience including those set aside as pastors or evangelists. Two brothers who had years ago renounced Christianity and had even taken Hindu names were won back to the church and became active in its work. Similarly a village steward who had been led astray by Arya Samajists found no satisfaction or peace in his new experience and returned to the church making public confession of the error of his ways.

The reforming agenda continued to be followed by the missionaries. They met with some success in the question of children marriage but as the church awakened to such needs and became more aggressive there was more opposition from the caste Hindus. During the year of 1939 a group of new village converts was driven away from home by non-Christians and forced to live in the open for some days and nights. On several occasions the Christian workers were refused seats in motor buses because of such hostilities but the police intervention brought quiet on this front. Vigorous efforts were made by caste Hindus to persuade parents to remove their children from mission schools and send them to local Board schools, where some of them were admitted inspite of being 'untouchable' but not without casteist hatred and attitude. In most cases reportedly both parents and children continued their relation to the

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 1937, Godhra, Lucknow Publishing House, 1938, pp. 93-94.

Mission schools as they refused to be deceived by 'friendly gestures' on the part of caste Hindus.⁸⁰

Quite frequently members belonging to the 'Congress party' would disrupt the meetings of the missionaries. This was noticeable in the efforts in certain districts to put a stop to school grants and in the agitation to persuade Christians to enlist them as Hindus in the Census. One such of their Christian was shot at and wounded in 1940.⁸¹

Though the war years had put strains on the missionaries' resources yet the evangelical zeal had not exhausted their enthusiasm. Two very successful *melas* in the Baroda district despite intolerably high prices were organised. The *mela* at Kava was well attended by the village Christians from Padra, Kareli and Jambusar circuits.

The other *mela* was held at Tundav in the Savli circuit. The local leaders were present in large numbers. A number of person were baptized and two weddings were solemnized which was matter of real interest for the village Christians.⁸²

During 1944, 486 villages were visited and 1,128 public evangelistic meetings were held. Help seekers were helped during the month of special evangelism. Of these 76 were later on received in the Christian church by administering to them the rite of baptism.⁸³

The Christian *melas* were becoming an annual affair at different villages. Fourteen such *melas* were organized in nine circuits of the district

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 1939, Baroda Residency, Lucknow Publishing House, 1940, pp. 249-251.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 1940, Godhra, Lucknow Publishing House, 1940, p. 32.

⁸² *G.A.C & G.W.C.R* 1943, Nadiad, Lucknow Publishing House, 1944, pp. 42-43.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 1944, Nadiad, Surat Mission Press, 1945 p.39.

in 1945.⁸⁴ Adult literacy was one of the most important activities of the Christian church. They started new classes and taught individually wherever it was possible. The number of those who had taken advantage of such classes was 109.⁸⁵

The best period of the year for evangelistic meetings for their people was the summer when open air meetings and melas were held on moonlit nights. The Gayan Toly's plays become prominent part of these *melas*. The object of these plays was to awaken people begins the old spirit of superstition. In 1947, *melas* were held only at Kava, Savli, Tundav and Gothda due to great scarcity of grain and financial stringency.⁸⁶

In the Independent India, the hostility of the upper caste Hindus to the Christians was reducing. In 1949 there were instances of non-Christians calling the preachers to their homes and fields in order to hear what they wanted to say. The groups of village Christians in the company of their pastors would go out on Sundays for visitation and witness. Bishop Subhan motivated them by his inspiring messages in Baroda where large crowds of Christians and some non-Christians participated in the Passion Week services. There were 348 Sunday schools in which 14676 pupils were receiving instruction in the scriptures. They also continued stress the need of adult classes. But despite these persistent efforts, the 1949 Report regrets that a large percentage of their Christian population was still illiterate, in villages. Hence they urged the importance of all who were training in the high schools and the Theological school to devote their vacation time to literacy work.⁸⁷

The Church continued deepening their work to educate and empower women. In 1957 they worked with the village women by holding

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 1945, Nadiad, Surat Mission Press, 1946, p. 74

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 1946, Nadiad, Surat Mission Press 1947, pp. 43-44.

⁸⁶ *G.A.C.R.*, 1947, Nadiad, Surat Mission Press 1948, pp. 53-55.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 1949, Nadiad, Surat Mission Press, 1950, pp. 41-43.

four teaching institutes. A total number of 76 women representing 28 villages attended these institutes in Jambusar, Padra, Narukot and Vasad. The teaching included study of Bible lessons, Adult Education, the Christian Home and sewing. Miss L.U. Dass an enthusiastic evangelist and teacher and, Ruthbai Thomas took lead to teach the adult.⁸⁸

Although the missionaries had been trying not only to convert the locals but also making them 'true' Christians, it was not easy for the locals to abandon the earlier customs and ties, But after nearly seven decades of work they could take some satisfaction. But 1960, there were 164 Separated Christians in the Baroda city. Separated Christians meant those baptized Christians who practiced Christian ways of living separating themselves from their former castes and customs and living as active members of the church. Baroda central church comprised then a community of 1312 Christians. Rev. Raiji M. Rathod who had studied in the U.S.A. for three years was giving them an inspiring leadership.

The church had regular English services on Sunday evenings besides regular Gujarati services. On the Easter day of 1960, Brahmin convert was baptized in the church. Lucyben U. Dass, the district women's work director, held four successful women's institutions during the year at Jambusar, Dora, Tundav and Baroda. It had given real push to women's work.⁸⁹

In the year 1961 Rev. Rathod, the pastor of the Baroda Methodist Church reported that the church started giving Radio programmes on Easter Sunday and broad casted the Christian message.⁹⁰

In the year 1963, Rev. J. B. Singh was in charge of the church and by his strenuous efforts he had maintained the tempo of the progress.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 1957, Baroda, Lucknow Publishing House, 1957, p. 85.

⁸⁹ *G.A.C.R.*, 1960, Nadiad, Lucknow Publishing House, 1960, p. 36.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 1961, Baroda, Lucknow Publishing House, 1961, p. 38.

activities like the woman's society, Sunday school Sunday morning and evening services, choir and mid-week prayer meetings are going on regularly and contribute immensely towards the well being of the church.⁹¹

In the year 1967 Missionaries were able to get started in some really solid evangelistic work, going out into villages with a team including the local pastor and preacher, the conference lady evangelist, and the Gram Sevak. They spent enough time with people in a number of villages to really enter into their lives.

Laymen of Baroda church went out to Padre Dumed Savli circuits to conduct Sunday schools, church service in villages where there were no pastors or paid preachers. This had brought a closer relationship between city and village Christians and had enlivened the village churches. In Baroda church there was a wide variety of programmes throughout the week, with each of the different organizations of the church participating. One evening the programme was in the hands of the youth fellowship, another time it was conducted by the women's society. One evening there was a discussion of the structures of the church, another time a lively discussion on the question of civil marriage.

Much of the district evangelistic work was the co-operative venture of Mrs. Bauman, Mr. Bauman Mr. P. K. Dass Miss Lucy Dass, and Miss E. C. Fairbanks Mr. Jacob Merchant and too many others who had helped in various ways.⁹²

In the year 1969 Villages and *mohullas* were visited meetings were held by the preachers, pastors and many volunteers. The evangelistic bands visit the fairs and melas at places of pilgrimage, put up book stalls, and held

⁹¹ *Ibid* 1963, Nadiad, Lucknow Publishing House, 1963, p. 30.

⁹² G.A.C. & G.W.C.R., 1967, Baroda, pp.42-43.

meetings. With the exception of some disturbances on a small scale everywhere the people heard their message, gladly provided entertainment and hospitality and brought Christian books and pictures.

Rev. David Bauman did wonderful evangelistic work through his film shows in many villages both among the Christians as well as non-Christians. In many villages the *sarpanch* and the leaders of the village invited him and arranged for the meeting in public classes ⁹³

Baroda Methodist Church had gone out to places nearby and far away for evangelistic work in the year 1970. Meetings were held at different places in rural areas and many non-Christians co-operated seven melas were held in the Jambusar circuit, the non-Christians attended them and the village heads cooperated with them.

Miss Lucy Dass stressed on evangelism in her teaching where she held institutes for women that they may teach and preach the Gospel to the non-Christian women.⁹⁴ During the year 1972, teaching institutes were held for women in different villages like Jambusar, Alasra, Narukot and Vasad. The teaching had included a study of adult Education, the Christian home hand work and sewing, the evening program had been through the use of the projector on Health Lucy U. Dass and Ruthbai Thomesbhai had given their time to teach the Adult Education classes.⁹⁵

In 1974, the members of the evangelistic committee from Baroda church went to Harni mela and also to Bhadbhut Mela to do the Evangelistic work with the help of Rev. David Bauman, they showed the film king of kings and other educational films to village people. Also they

⁹³ *Ibid.* 1969, Godhra, 1969, pp. 36-37.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 1970, Nadiad, 1970, p. 61-62.

⁹⁵ *G.A.C & G.W.C.R.*, 1972, Godhra, 1972, p. 85.

showed there films to high school students where they had good response.⁹⁶

The members of the Adult youth fellowship of the Fatehgunj church are very active. They have the project of paying scholarship to one poor college student and giving help to two widows. Also they visit the sick in the hospital where they pray for the Sick give those fruits and biscuits. They conduct free tuition class for Christian students of the SSC. The Christian teachers gave free service.⁹⁷

In the beginning 1980 at Dabhoi a woman society retreat was arranged by Mrs. Persisben Swayampati, in which many women participated. A special meeting of the Vadodara Mahila Mandal was convened one day at the district bungalow, which many women attended. Mrs. A. S. Parmar W. S. C.S. area adviser gave able leadership giving many useful suggestions.

There was a steady progress in establishing class for adults, both for non-literate people to teach them how to read and write, and also for other groups of persons for teaching other subjects. Some of their rural pastor's wives, and the wife of one district superintendent had been participating in special project of teaching basic principles of public health. With the well trained staff of Nadiad Methodist hospital an school of Nursing to train there persons, they are given basic instructions to concerning common ailments such as diarrhoea, itch etc. and then sent out to their home communities, where they import the same knowledge to their neighbors, there was good follow up programmer conducted by the nurses and doctors of Nadiad. Several sewing classes were also conducted in several rural centres, where participants were both Christians and from Hindu families.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 1974, Baroda, 1974, p. 36.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 1976, Bharuch, 1976, p. 46.

A youth seminar was held in Vadodara under the direction of the conference youth director. The local churches gave financial assistance for this. It was a very successful seminar. In Kareli village a family like institute was held. About 40 people participated from surrounding villages. The women were taught handicrafts.⁹⁸

Church finance

The Board of Foreign Mission was the first Board of the Methodist Episcopal church of U.S.A. which financed 127 missionaries came to Gujarat from 1888 to 1980. It had different names Methodist Missionary Society and the Board of Foreign Mission and Church Extension.⁹⁹

Right from the establishment of the Methodist Church of Fatehgnuj in Baroda in 1880, the Board of Foreign Mission and Board of the Methodist Episcopal Church of USA were sending funds to maintain the church. But in the year 1935, the Baroda church not only became fully self supporting but also undertook to support the city work locally. All collections for the support of this church came from the earnings of laymen.¹⁰⁰ People used to give donations, tithes (10% of the income), thanksgiving on different events such birthday, anniversary, recovery from the illness.

In raising finance for the church, the spiritual context was important. The church is religious spiritual organization engaged in the spiritual work for the people. The Church aimed to involve the people for different church programmes like missionary, social, relief, educational scholarships and maintenance of buildings etc.

⁹⁸ *Ibid* – 1980, Bharuch, 1980, PP. 69,70.

⁹⁹ Domnik Israel, *op.cit*, pp. 47,48.

¹⁰⁰ G.A.C.R. 1935, Nadiad, Lucknow Publishing House, 1936, p. 188.

The church administrators to become accountable to the lay people used to periodically publish the statements of accounts.¹⁰¹ In 1970s, the church in Baroda experienced growth due to urbanisation. The Jivan Jyoti (then called the Fertilizer and Refinery Church) and Sharon Methodist Churches were instituted as also the Trinity Methodist Church and the Canaan Methodist Church were added.¹⁰²

Organizational Structure of the Methodist Church Baroda

The official leaders of the church are the Pastors, District Superintendent and Bishops. **The pastor** is the religious head of the local church and is appointed to his position by the Bishop after consultation with the district superintendent. He has the charge of all the activities of the local organization from conducting the Sunday worship service to organizing the members of the church into effective units: from arranging devotional meetings, to supplying religious literature; from accounting to the District Superintendent to arranging the annual conference for the work of the church. Pastor is the central entity for the development of the community.

The **District Superintendent** is appointed by the Bishop from amongst the pastors. He has within his supervision a number of local churches, comprising a district. A Bishop is elected by the General conference and consecrated by other Bishops. He is amenable to the General conference. The duties of a Bishop include overseeing the temporal and spiritual welfare of the church, fixing the appointments of pastors and presiding at the Annual conference.¹⁰³

Official Board, A local Methodist Episcopal Church centres its authority in what is called the Official Board. This group is composed of laymen and women who form the basic democratic, controlling body of the

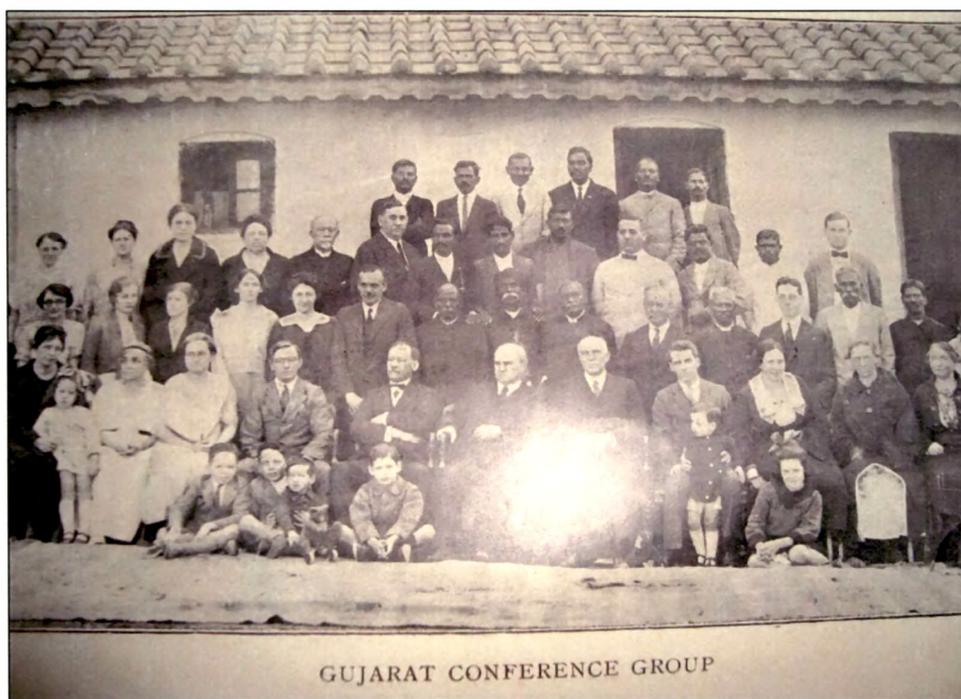
¹⁰¹ Domnik Israel, pp. 127-128.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p. 128

¹⁰³ Frederic B-Fisher and Walter Books Foley, *op.cit*, p. 14-16

church.¹⁰⁴ The Official Board constitutes different committees which decide different basic things to undertake during the years.

In 1895 the first Gujarat District was formed and Rev. E. F. Frease was appointed its Residing Elder. The Gujarat District was divided into two districts of the Bombay Conference, Baroda District and Ahmadabad District in 1909.



As a result of strong resolution by the Centenary Committee appointed in 1920 to survey the Gujarat field to separate the Gujarat area as a conference for closer supervision and more concrete efforts, the Gujarat conference was organised in the 30th session of the Bombay Annual Conference, held at Poona in December 1921. The first session of the Gujarat Annual Conference was held at Godhra on December 14-19, 1922, with Bishop J. W. Robinson as the resident and presiding Bishop.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13

¹⁰⁵ Ithiel V. Master, *op.cit.*, P. 406

Gujarat Annual conference continued to be organized every year at different places in Gujarat ever since. At present Methodist church in Baroda is Episcopal Church governed by Bishop. The Methodist Church, Baroda at Fatehgunj to conduct two worship services on every Sunday, Gujarati Worship service in the morning and English worship services in the evening. The Gujarati service is a very large congregation as most of the Methodist community members are from Gujarat. But Baroda is the only place where the English service is regularly held.¹⁰⁶ In English worship service people come from various backgrounds and worship in the Fatehgunj Methodist church where many young people from the University and those who come from other provinces for services, very regularly attend it.¹⁰⁷

The Methodist Youth Fellowship (MYF) was formed in early 1970s and had been taking active part in the life of the church such as church decorations on festivals, evangelistic work, running of Bookstalls, Sunday school and visitation etc. The members of the Adult Youth Fellowship of the Fatehgunj Church had been very active in helping poor college students and giving help to widows. They would also visit the sick in the hospital give them fruits and biscuits.¹⁰⁸

METHODIST CHURCH AND ITS BRANCHES

City Christ Methodist Church

Since the time of Sayajirao Gaekwad there was only one Methodist church in the city, i.e. in the Fatehgunj area. But due to industrialization and urbanization church also experienced heavy growth. In the 1940s, many Christian families started living in Gendigate area of the Baroda city. Many of these Christian families were not able to go to attend the Fatehgunj

¹⁰⁶ *G.A.C. & G.W.C.R.*, 1974, p. 35

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 1978, Bharuch, 1978, p. 60, and 1973, Nadiad, 1973, p. 57

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 1976, Bharuch, 1976, p. 45, 46

church. At that time, District Superintendent Rev. Dr. F. Plazer decided to have a church in the Baroda city area. For this purpose a house was rented in Mogalwada.

In the year `1947 when this church was started there were only eight families in the church. With the efforts of Morarbhai Clark and Bhanjibhai Varma, members of that church, a two storied building near Mogalwada was Purchased in 1951 at the cost of Rs.15000/-. The ground floor was used for pastor residence while first floor was used for the church service. In the year 1958, Rev. Thomas K. Christian was appointed as a pastor at the city Christ church and with his untiring efforts the Christ church was declared self sufficient in 1964.

A Muslim Vohra family who had a house adjoining the church building wanted to sell the house which was purchased at the cost of 50,000/-. All the churches from Gujarat contributed and within the span of two years, a new church building was erected in 1980. Then there were over 100 families in this church staying in distant places, like Waghodia Road, Makarpura, Manjalpur Harni Road etc.¹⁰⁹

Sharon Methodist Church

Sharon Methodist church is one of the branches of the Baroda Centenary Methodist Mother Mission founded in the year 1976. Rev. S. C. John served this church till 1978. Since Sharon Chapel had no sufficient place for a large Sunday congregation, the new church was established in 1981 for the people of Navayard which is known as Canaan Methodist Church. Sharon Methodist Church is a big mission in Gujarat catering to 400 families. People came from areas like Nizampura, Chhani, Rukmani Nagar,

¹⁰⁹ *Gujarat Regional Conference Souvenir, Methodist Church in India, 1997, Godhra*

MIT School, Wilson Street, Sahkar Nagar, Mission and compound Sharon Park.¹¹⁰

Jivan Jyot Methodist Church

Twelve Kilometers away from Baroda at village Bajwa, two big industrial companies were established namely Gujarat Refinery and Gujarat State Fertilizers Company in early 1960. There were some Christian families working with these companies. From 1964 to 1967 they were the members of Fatehgunj Methodist church Baroda but they started organizing worship services at different houses of families staying at Fertilizer Nagar and at Gujarat Refinery colony and such arrangement continued till 1970. When official foundation was laid by Bishop R. D. Joshi, it was named Jivan Jyot Church. Rev. Dr. Shantukumar Paramar, District Superintendent of Baroda District at that time, contributed a lot in the establishment and spiritual progress of this church. In 1971, Late Rev. Ithiel V. Master was appointed as a pastor with the sincere efforts of Rev. Sudhir C. John, assistant pastor, Methodist Youth Fellowship was founded in 1974. In the year 1983, Rev. Nimrod Christian made vigorous efforts for the erection of the church building. Members of this church collected 4 lakhs rupees while North Carolina Church in America contributed 10,000 Dollars.

Apart from spiritual activities, Jivan Joyt Methodist Church has been engaged in the social activities. They used to provide free medical services to poor, needy and sick people. They also taught people about health and hygiene, encouraged education among poor children ran Balvadi, sewing class and classes for adult-literacy. Members of this church also used to go to the backward areas of Nasvadi Taluka and organized medical camp and provided free medical services. Social workers used to organize seminars regarding freedom from addiction and aids.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*

¹¹¹ *Ibid*

Trinity Methodist Church

The origin of the Trinity Methodist church lies in the need to form a mission among people from Akota, Alkapuri and Gotri areas, the leaders of those areas represented their demand to the Gujarat Conference to establish a Methodist Church at Gotri and with their efforts Trinity Church was founded on 13-9-1980. At that time there were only 30 families in the church. At Harinagar, one Mr. Joshi was ready to sell his house to the Christians for church building in 1982 in 4 lakhs. The church members donated their two salaries for the initial payment and collected 85000/-. Accordingly the building came into existence in March 1985. At present there are 65 to 70 families as members in this congregation.¹¹²

By the end of the nineteenth century there were different groups of missionaries working in Gujarat especially in Baroda and nearby areas. In Baroda, the Irish Presbyterian Mission, London Missionary Society and Methodist Church had started their work. But the 'mass movement' in Gujarat was mainly confined to the Methodist church. In the period between 1899 and 1905 a notable move forward for the missionaries occurred in Gujarat. The famine from 1889 to 1901 was the major factor in the church activities which opened the way for missionaries to work among the famine-stricken people. The result of these activities was a large number of converts to Christianity.

The evangelistic work of Methodist Church of Baroda had taken the missionaries to different parts of the Baroda city and surrounding villages. The eradication of social evils and spread of education was the crucial part of their agenda. Though the missionaries failed impress and attract the high-caste Hindus to their fold yet there was sprinkling of diversity in their catch. The community expanded and the church also

¹¹² *Ibid*

attained financial autonomy in 1935. Four or five church buildings were added to the older one in the Fatehgunj area. What way the community of new faith progressed would be discussed at length in the next chapters.