The birth of Lord Jesus Christ heralded the dawn of Christianity in the world. Christians, as the followers of Jesus Christ came to be known, which is evidenced in the Holy Bible “it was in Antioch [Syria] that the disciples were first called ‘Christians’ \(^1\) (Act.11:26). The secular belief is that the term Christians was used by Non-Christians to describe the group of people loyal to the teachings of Jesus Christ\(^2\). With the passage of time, the new faith viz. Christianity reached out far and wide with more and more people embracing it. Subsequently, the spread of Christianity changed the thought process of many people leading to many changes in the course of the history of human civilisation in many parts of the world.

Christianity as a faith is generally identified as the western phenomenon. While, in fact, Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, Palestine, West Asia. He lived and preached in and around Jerusalem and was crucified in Golgotha, the outskirts of the town of Jerusalem – both places in Asia\(^3\). Moreover, many developments regarding the propagation and consolidation of Christianity as a creed happened in Asian continent. It may be that Bethlehem was ruled by Rome which had led to the belief of associating Christianity with the West\(^4\).

The brief and eventful life of Jesus Christ was spent mostly in and around Jerusalem. During the course of his travels, he gathered twelve disciples around him whom he always exhorted to preach the precepts of His faith more by example. The Jews sensed danger to their power and belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ and termed his actions and teachings a blasphemy. It was Judas, one of his 12 apostles who betrayed him to the Jewish leaders. A mock trial and crucifixion of Jesus followed. However, it is believed that he was resurrected after the third day and forty days after his resurrection, he ascended into heaven\(^5\).

The Crucifixion of Jesus sent shock and fear waves among the disciples of Jesus and they dispersed in different directions soon after they were blessed by the Holy Spirit with zeal and a mission\(^6\). “Go therefore and make disciples from all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them
to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. The apostles began to travel to various parts of the world and began to preach Jesus, whom they had personally experienced in their life. They undertook the missionary activity as the expression of God’s will ‘to those people who have not heard about it’. St. Thomas, one of the apostles gifted with zeal and fervour, came to India with the message of Jesus Christ, which, subsequently, led to the introduction of Christianity in India.

2.1. Jesus, the Messiah

The coming of Jesus on earth signalled the momentous change in the history of mankind. How he shaped the destiny of the people by laying the foundation of a refreshingly new thought process, is considered a divine manifestation. His uncomplicated message of universal love, mercy and charity brought about a transformation in the lives of the long neglected, marginalised and very miserable section of the society.

Jesus spent time amidst these oppressed people and his miracles were the simple kind deeds done to an individual, and were substantial acts of proclaiming and affecting God’s triumph over the power of evil in the final hour. His mandate to his followers was, to love thy neighbour and pray for those who persecute you. And He lived by example. At the time of his crucifixion He prayed for his persecutors “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”. The most important teaching that stands out in the life of Jesus is the Sermon on the Mount, which influenced many leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Mt.5: 3-12).
2.2. St. Thomas: - The beginning of Christianity in India

It is believed that Christianity as a creed was introduced in India as early as in the 1st century A.D. In fact, St. Thomas, an apostle of Jesus Christ, arrived in Kodumgallor, in Kerala in 52 A.D, along with some traders. St. Thomas, a Jew by birth, began his mission with the orientation of the already existing Jewish community and other local groups in Malabar Coast. It is further substantiated by the establishment of the Indian Church of Malabar also referred to as Syro Malabar Church, tracing its foundation to St. Thomas. The great missionary kept on moving from place to place carrying the message of Jesus Christ, bringing succour and solace to the people in general and the oppressed sections of the society, in particular. At the same time, he tried to consolidate the church and put it under properly effective administration.

He left for Madras in AD 69. It was here that St. Thomas was martyred in Mylapore (Madras) in AD 72, but not before he had left an everlasting impact in and around the places that he visited. He attracted even a considerable number of high class Brahmins to his fold, founded seven Churches on the coast. These now most celebrated Churches have been attracting a huge rush of faithuls since: they are those of Neranam, Kollam (Quilon), Chayal, Kokkamangalam, Kottakavu (Parur) Kodungallor (Cranganore), and Palayur.

Some people claim that St. Thomas carried the teachings of Jesus Christ and spread the new faith in South India much before it found any space in the west and different available facts and records are quoted to substantiate the assertion. The Indian Church also subscribes to such a view that St. Thomas, the apostle who experienced the risen Lord in his life was, in fact, the first torch-bearer of Christian faith.

This belief is fortified by the mass tradition, especially, connected with his (Apostle Thomas) stay in the south, which such believers feel should not be ignored or lightly passed over. Moreover, there is the additional evidence that large Christian community calling themselves by his name and claiming him as their founder, still exists. Infact, the linear descendants of the first converts by St. Thomas follow such traditions and beliefs about the origin of Christianity in India. They are called Syro-Malabar Christians or St. Thomas Christians. All of them denote the antiquity of their origin. There may be some differences in their customs and rituals, but they are all
peripheral. Even the Portuguese, who came to India, centuries later, were consciously respectful of the Syrian Christians, their lifestyle and their way of worship\(^{21}\).

Many eminent researches subscribe to this view of the dawn of Christianity in India. It is admitted that much of the history about the existence of the Christian community alongside with Brahmanism and Buddhism was recorded merely by Syriac and Greek authors, who conveniently ignored the significance of the beginnings of the Indian Church and the Acts of the St. Thomas and his first fruitful interface with the Jewish people in India, vis-à-vis the Christianity in India\(^{22}\). However, with the onset of the enterprise of merchants and missionaries of the East-Syrian or Persian Church in India\(^{23}\) cite the appearance of the apocryphal Act of Judas Thomas, written in Syrian in the Edessan circle about the time of the 3\(^{rd}\) century, but the view has not found any substantial acceptance. Yet, another claim put forth by the opponents of the founding of the Christianity with the arrival of St. Thomas in the 1\(^{st}\) century A.D. is the variance of the socio-cultural and even ecclesiastical ethos of the early Christians in Kerala, with those of the Portuguese. However, it may be mentioned that the early home-grown Christians developed a religious harmony with the Hindus and were complementary to each other. They led a unique social-ecclesiastical life style more akin to native tradition\(^{24}\).

The Portuguese wanted to enforce their own code of life and worship among the Syrian Christians. In fact they allowed fish and liquor (a sort of celebration) in Lenten season whereas Christians prepare themselves with penance, fasting and abstaining (a sort of mourning) to commemorate the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ\(^{25}\). This meddling with the existing tradition of the Syrian Christians who enjoyed as good social, economic and political rights as any other contemporary sect or community, was another bit of a sore point between the Syrian Christians and Portuguese.

Again, the Syrian Christians had more affiliations with Persia and Mesopotamia because of their trade and commerce and the Syrian Malabar Church was guided by the Chalcedon\(^{26}\), East Syrian and even Nestorian\(^{27}\) rites. Even the Church hierarchy among the Syrian Christians was determined by the Syrian Church between A.D. 825 to 1751\(^{28}\).
2.3. The Kanaya Christians or Southists

Yet, another historical fact regarding the founding and flowering of Christianity in the Sub-continent needs be mentioned. It was in the year A.D. 345 that the Atochan²⁹ Patriarch Mar Ignatius, the metropolitan Bishop of Edessan, sent a merchant from Persia along with 72 families comprising about 400 Christians to Kerala under the versatile leadership of Thomas of Cana, who found favour with the local Christians³⁰. This Thomas of Cana, called as Thomas brought Christians from Baghdad, Ninevev and Jerusalem³¹. He was well received by the ruler of Chera empire, Cherman Perumal with liberal and specific grants of land that stipulated high social status³². It is said:

Upon his arrival, Cheraman Perumal, the ruler of the Chera Empire welcomed the immigrants and granted them land and 72 royal privileges. With the accreditation of these royally privileged immigrants, accompanied by a bishop, priests and deacons, the St. Thomas Christian Church was established³³.

Although, as a part of the Syrian Church, these people have maintained a pure lineal descent from Thomas of Cana and observe certain social customs strictly, e.g. they won’t marry their young ones out of their own community, and they have their own priests. Above all they are the most enterprising communities among the Syrian Christians³⁴.

2.4. The Church in Punjab

It is difficult to assign a specific time to the arrival of Christianity into the plains of Punjab. Of course, there is some evidence that it had taken roots in Punjab much before the second century A.D. Some extant documents and maps and even coins of the period support the historicity of such a claim. The archaeological survey of Pakistan has in its possession the documents corroborating the visit of St. Thomas, the apostle to Punjab in A.D. 42³⁵.

What is more, a vestige of the ancient Christian community in the form of Taxila cross³⁶ was found in the ancient city of Sirka, near Taxila way back in 1935 which is cited as a fact that Christians existed in ancient times in Punjab. A Church historian of 20th century, Michael Anikuzhikattil, affirms that St. Thomas, the greatest missionary visited Punjab in A.D.42³⁷ and when he was in the court of Gondhophoras, he heard
about the passing away of Mother Mary (Mother of Jesus) and went back to Jerusalem to see her physical form before its internment. Whatever may be the duration of his stay in Punjab, it is believed that apostle St. Thomas, who had experienced the risen Lord, was the harbinger of Christianity in Punjab. The available sources lead us to the query – Did the church in Punjab have an apostolic origin?

Bishop Herman D’ Souza’s study on St. Thomas in India also refers that at Thatta in Sind province of Pakistan on the Indus River in Sindh, he [St. Thomas] is venerated as “Tuma Bhagat”, by a small group of devotees even today. These devotees still practice some Christian rites and possess a book which is believed to be the Gospel of St. Mathew.

The most ancient record about the apostolate of St. Thomas is the New Testament apocryphal, “The Acts of St. Thomas, written in Syriac in the Edassen circle about the turn of the third century A.D. According to the Acts of Thomas, Gondaphoros was the Indian King who had the apostle Thomas brought to India to build the palace in the capital city of Taxila. “Gondaphoros is the Greek form of the Parthian name Vindafarna, and a king of that name reigned in the Punjab from his capital city of Taxila from 20 to 48 A.D.”. One of the historians, Farquhar argues that the historical accuracy of the Act of Thomas points out that the description to Gondaphoros’ palace in the Acts shows a surprisingly accurate local knowledge. For some historians, the romantic description in the Acts of Thomas, the journeys and activities of the Apostle in the kingdom of Gondaphoros, who ruled over Afghanistan, Kandahar, Seistan, is only a fanciful account. Whereas for others, the romantic account mentioned in Acts is probably based on a historical nucleus, gleaned from the first and second century oral tradition.

It is broadly agreed that the North India apostolate of St. Thomas lends some historical authenticity to the Acts of St. Thomas. Some relevant elements to the composition of the Acts might have existed to form the nucleus of the oral tradition or the point of deviation for the romantic Acts that is why it is credible that Christians existed in Punjab at an early date viz.1st century.

In the middle ages, new religious orders, like Franciscans and Dominicans were founded. These missionaries went to different parts of Asia and began to preach Christianity. With the arrival of St. Francis Xavier in Mylapore in October 1542, Christianity began to branch out to Northern India.
2.5. Persian Christians Migration into Punjab

Another determining factor concerning the spread of Christianity in Northern India and especially in Punjab was the persecution of the Persian Church, according to A Mingana, a Church historian in his book The Early Spread of Christianity in India in (1926). William G. Young, states in “Patriarch Shah and Caliph” that ‘the Persian Empire accepted Zoroastrianism as a state religion and labelled a man unpatriotic and a traitor if he did not accept Zoroastrianism as his religion. He was to be condemned to death’. As a consequence of such a state policy, the Christians were ruthlessly persecuted and forced to immigrate to Punjab (Northern India) during the reign of Zoroastrian Shah of Shahpur in the year 340 A.D.

Outwardly, such movement of the Christianity from a foreign place would have implied a significant and steady impact on the demographic pattern in Northern India from the missionary point of view, but there was not any such effect but a surprising decline in the flourishing of Christianity in the subsequent periods. It is conceded that the advent of Islam around 1200 A.D. put a brake on the high hopes of the propagation of Christianity. But such a hypothesis is extraneous to the fact as the decline of the Church of East was witnessed in much of Asia, in the late middle Ages. Browne ascribed the decline of the Church in Asia at that stage mainly to some internal weakness in belief, improper orientation and missionary methods. Importantly, the Church wherever it went failed to give respect and responsibility to the indigenous priests and failed to ordain them to continue the growth of the church. Given such causes, it is not surprising that the Church lay dormant in Northern India over centuries. And the practicing Christians wherever left would proudly claim to be the descendents of St. Thomas tradition than having anything to do with the later flourishing movements, whatsoever.

2.6. The Mughal Period (1579-1707)

There was a conspicuously negligible movement in the flourish of the Christian faith over a long period of time, till the reign of the great Mughal Akbar and Jahangir in the late 16th century A.D. When some attempts were made to establish the Christian Churches in Punjab; Akbar allowed churches to be built in Agra and Lahore. Akbar, a Sunni Muslim by birth, but a Sufi by conviction and Catholic in outlook, built an “Ibadat Khana” and invited great luminaries of different strands, of different religious thought.
such as Hindu, Jain and Jew to propound their views on life and religion. Christian preachers, too, got invited to this interaction\(^50\).

2.6.1. The First Mission: 1579-1583

The Christian missionaries from foreign countries, particularly Portuguese Catholic Priests, visited Punjab during the Mughal era, though very little is known of their activities\(^51\). The three Catholic Missionaries, viz. Father Rudolf Acquaviv, Francis Henriquez and Anthony De Montserrat visited the Court of Akbar, at his personal invitation, at Fathehpur Sikri on 28\(^{th}\) February 1580\(^52\). According to Mangana, the main reason for Akbar’s invitation was to provide chaplains for the Christian employees\(^53\). It is said that in their interaction with Akbar, the latter was highly impressed by the sheer persuasive discourses by the missionaries. In the like manner, the courtiers of Akbar, including Abul Fazal showed keen interest in the missions and the missionaries. Some of the courtiers were more than willing to embrace the new faith. But the prevailing political compulsions of the king out weighed all other consideration. Hence, no tangible result of the missionaries could be achieved and they had to return to Goa. However, they had left an indelible impact of Portuguese culture on the courtiers of Akbar.

2.6.2. The Second Mission: 1591

The Second mission to the court of Akbar was undertaken by Frs. Edward Leitan, Christopher De Vega and a companion in 1591. Once again there was a healthy discourse, a sort of understanding between Akbar, his courtiers and the missionaries, but there was no conversion to Christianity\(^54\).

2.6.3. The Third Mission: 1595 –1602

With their persistent efforts, Christian missionaries were given the liberty to preach the new faith to the people. They were able to gain a foothold and build a magnificent church in Lahore\(^55\). A third mission comprising of two priests Jerome Xavier, Emmanuel Pinherriro and Brother Benedict Goes, was sent to Lahore to take care of pastoral aspect of the Christians there. During their stay over, they renewed their efforts to convince the Emperor of the singular charm of the Christianity and endeavoured to put a new zeal in the propagation of the new message to the people around. While Jerome Xavier spent his time in the court, Pinherriro centred his focus on
Despite numerous odds, a tremendous progress of the mission was achieved and the new faith was firmly established in the Punjab.

However, there was little change in the living habits of the converts, viz. their dress and food habits were similar to the native Muslims but the Christians wore a cross or beads round their neck to distinguish themselves. In 1602, the Jesuits achieved a notable success in obtaining from Akbar, a written order issued under the royal seal, permitting any of his subjects who desired to embrace Christianity to do so without any fear. The granting of this written declaration was a valuable concession and one that proved useful to the Jesuits on more than one occasion afterwards. His successor Jahangir (1605) allowed the missionaries to propagate their religion but due to the war between the Portuguese and Jahangir, forced the Christians to close the Church at Lahore in 1614. Shah Jahan (1627-58) also persecuted the missionaries and the Christians. It was mainly the hostile conduct of Portuguese in Bengal that turned the emperor against them. However, later he allowed some Portuguese Jesuits to establish a mission at Lahore, and even assigned stipends to the priests.

Some more evidence regarding the existence and the influence of the Church in Punjab can be gleaned from the “The Hindustan-Tibet Mission” published by Fr. Fulgentus Vannini OFM. Cap, in which he states that the Holy Father in Rome entrusted the reins of North India and North West India to the Capuchin fathers, which undoubtedly indicates that the missionaries were active from 1703 onwards, when the Prefecture of Tibet was established. It affirms that the presence and influence of Christians was there in certain parts of Punjab at least from the Mughal period onwards.

### 2.7. The Presence of the Roman Catholic Church

In the narrative of the Christian movement in Northern India, one cannot ignore the reference to the Roman Catholic Church, which did a fairly impressive endeavour in the spread of Christianity. They established an apostolic prefecture in Agra in 1784, but could not plant themselves firmly in Delhi and Punjab for some reasons. It is believed that the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857 (in fact the 1st armed uprising against the British rule) created a sort of hostile atmosphere preventing the expansion of the missionary work and the intentions of the missionaries, themselves. It is not surprising that the first Protestants when they came to Delhi in 1811, found only 20 Roman Catholics there.
Owing to the many deterrents in their path, the Roman Catholic Church did not succeed in its mission in a big way in the villages of Punjab. Nevertheless, it continued the missionary work among the poor oppressed sections of the society who steadily got converted to Christianity. It was this spadework done by the Roman Catholic Church that the subsequent missions even the foreign protestant missionaries found friendly response from the people. The flourish of Christianity gathered momentum both in reach and content, thereafter.

2.8. The Mass Movements.

2.8.1. The Church and People’s Movements.

Another defining factor in the history and the development of Christianity in Punjab on the whole, is the happening of mass movements from the lower castes of the prevailing social structure towards Christianity since 1873. Such movements at socio-economic significance at micro and macro level become a recurrent phenomenal statement of anger and resentment of the poor, oppressed and marginalised people. Many issues, the sore points over ages are thrown up. Problems related to economic deprivation, social inequality, poor health services, lack of educational opportunities, gender discrimination and so many other innumerable forms of human exploitation become the focus of the existing political agenda, which in turn transform the overall formation of a society. The new formations are effected by the radical shift from one set of belief to another as an alternative, a remedy to their age long misery.

It is in this perspective that the mass movement of the depressed and the exploited classes toward Christianity in Punjab took place in early decades of the 19th century. The neglected masses found in Christian fold, a succour, both moral and material, a kind of new identity. The converts got not only ecclesiastical blessings but also temporal encouragement with the arrival of the British army in Punjab in 1846. Chaplains were appointed for the religious needs of the Christian soldiers, who were ready enough to help and guide the life and activities of the converts in their new faith, thus making them feel as part of a big brotherhood.

2.8.2. The Group movement Among the Mehgs.

Mehgs, a group of people in the lowest strata of the society in Punjab comprised a total of 78,405 people in 1981. They were mostly concentrated in the districts of
Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Jalandhar, Kapurthala and Ferozepur. Weavers by caste, these landless people did odd jobs as artisans or grass cutters, and were placed just above the Chuhras and Chamars in caste system in Punjab.

A group of 25 families of Mehgs living in a village Jhandram, in Sialkot en masse embraced Christianity in 1859 giving up their age old idol worship, after they had an interface with a catechist, Jawalar Masih, who was incidentally reading out the Gospel of St. Mark to a group of men loading sugarcane. An initial curiosity led to their genuine interest in the teaching of the missionaries and after thorough deliberations, this group made a declaration of their new faith in February, 1859.

Such a move by the Mehgs did not go unopposed. Though the reaction in the beginning was subsided, it became more vocal and vehement as the conversions continued. As the new identity of the Mehgs was feared to upset the social set up of society which would hurt the upper sections both in their power and prestige, they, the vested interest groups led an offensive against such conversions. The headman of the village (Jhandram) one Diyala feared great loss, social and economic, with the loss of Mehgs to the new faith. The Muslim landlords feared that Mehgs would no longer work on Sabbath. On the whole there was a marked resentment against such conversion of the Mehgs to Christianity, as such many social restrictions and constraints were put on the life and activities of Christian Mehgs. They were forbidden to use water from the village well and to partake in social activities. In some cases, physical punishment was meted out to them. The Mehgs were so terrified that they dared not seek for themselves anything better than that was doled out to them by the upper castes; as a result, conversions to Christianity became negligible.

2.8.3. The Chuhras Movement

The Chuhras, the second largest of the Dalit castes in Punjab, were placed at the lowest rung of the social hierarchy and were obviously the most deprived of all the groups. The Chuhras from the rural areas were homeless labourers, even wandering in search of odd jobs which were generally the most defiling.

As with other such socially and economically underprivileged classes, Chuhras too felt oppressed and hopeless. The untold miseries heaped over them, day in and day out in the existing social spectrum had deprived them of even a semblance of identity.
They desperately needed an escape from subhuman existence to something human. The arrival of Christianity proved highly eventful for them.

The Chuhras were drawn towards Christianity as it offered them a casteless space, (an escape from the stigma of untouchability) a human fellowship with a social and religious identity, since the Gospel disregarded the very foundation of the in-built structure of the caste system. The outcastes, the marginalised, oppressed people adopted the Christian faith as the source of a new humanizing influence and the foundation of a new fellow community. They experienced a new will to live as individuals with self-respect in a community.

According to Andrew Gordon, the Chuhras movement to Christianity began in the year 1873, when Ditt who lived in Shahabdi, three miles South of Mirali in Sialkot district, presently in Pakistan, got converted to Christianity. Unlike all previous converts in Punjab, Ditt retained his place in the group to which he belonged and then persuaded that group in his village to throw off the age-old bondage to blind superstitions and accept love and liberty which he had found in Christ. The other villagers followed the exemplary decision of Ditt’s conversion to Christianity. Thus began the great “Chuhras Mass movement to Christianity”.

However, the momentum of the flourish and spread of the Christianity abated with the oncoming of Islam. The Christian converts found co-existence with Muslims more comfortable than they were used to find in their old folds. The Chuhras, for example, gave up the raising of the pigs in deference to the wishes of the Muslims who equally detested and opposed the devastating social and psychological malaise of untouchability. A remarkable change in their general attitude to life as against the other backward classes of society was witnessed.

2.9. **Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780 -1839).**

In 1752 marauders from Afghanistan under the leadership of Abdal, descended on and overran the whole of Punjab, causing large scale destruction to the life and property everywhere. The Christians were specially targeted and most of them specially were deported to Kabul and were never heard of later. Not only were the Christians humiliated, even the Churches were not spared. The impressive Church building near the old imperial palace in Lahore was razed to the ground with no traces left. Christianity
suffered a major blow and faced almost extinction in Punjab\textsuperscript{72}. The gloomy reversal over Christianity lasted for almost a century.

Even in the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, no missionary was allowed in his territory to preach the message of Jesus. However, he invited the missionary Rev. John C. Lowrie in 1835 from Ludhiana to establish an English medium school in Lahore for the young princes and the wards of the nobles of his court. But unfortunately, the missionary fell ill and had to return to Ludhiana. Anyway, his visit to the Maharaja left a deep impression on the Maharaja\textsuperscript{73}.

The most significant achievement of the missionaries in Punjab was the conversion of Maharaja Dalip Singh in 1853. There were some other equally prominent persons who embraced Christianity. The best known family was that of Raja Harnam Singh, the brother of Maharaja of Kapurthala. Raja Harnam Singh’s sons and daughter rose to occupy eminent positions in the national body politics and judiciary. Amrit Kaur became a minister of health in the Indian Union; Maharaja Singh became the governor of erstwhile Bombay state while Dalip Singh rose to be the judge of Punjab High Court.

Yet, another highly celebrated convert to Christianity was Sadhu Sunder Singh (b.1889), a Jat Sikh of Rampur, Patiala. A mystic by temperament, he was ever on the move and spent most of his years walking up and down The Hindustan–Tibet road. After 1935, nothing was heard of him.

All along these years there was a feeling of general resentment among the Sikhs over these notable conversions. The hurt was visible whenever any Sikh changed his allegiance and opted for Christianity. In 1873, when four Sikh boys of the mission school of Amritsar announced their decision to join Christianity, there were protest meetings all over the Punjab. Sikh preachers talked to the boys and prevented them from abandoning their ancestral faith\textsuperscript{74}.

\section*{2.10. The British Period}

The British came to India with the sole purpose of trade and commerce in 1757. With commendable business acumen, they organised themselves into East India Company and spread their lucrative domination over most part of India. Subsequently, the East India Company was taken over by the British Government in order to
consolidate both political and economic hold over the whole of India which happened in a deft and decisive manner between 1840 to 1849. Punjab, too, was added to the empire.

The English fought, won and stayed on in India. In their pursuit to establish their supremacy all around, they built army cantonments at all important towns. These cantonments were provided with regular churches and the clergy. The Churches came up in Lahore in 1846, in Sialkot in 1853, Ferozepur and Jullundur in 1856, Multan in 1859, Amritsar in 1863, and Dalhousie in 1870. As the number of the Britishers on the Indian soil grew, they brought along with them spiritual guides known as pastors or priests to address to the community’s religious needs. With the growing movement of Britishers here and there and the presence of the Churches with the priests, the activities of the Christian missionaries also became more and more visible in Punjab.

One noticeable factor of the beginning and the growth of Christianity is the fact, that Christianity as such does not represent one single, homogenous entity, an integral whole, but as with other religions, it is interpreted, practised and preached in diverse ways. Consequently, there have evolved different shades of opinion at variance with each other. Sometimes, political expediency has taken precedence over all other things in patronisation of one sect than the other. The history of the Christianity is replete with significant events where clergy has played a second fiddle to temporal power). Thus, we have Roman Catholic Church and Protestant church.

Initially, the Christianity came to South India in A.D. 52. Much later when the Portuguese (1510 – 1961) came and settled in the coastal area of Goa and Tamil Nadu, the Church that began to spread was Roman Catholic Church. With the coming of Dutch (1605 -1825) in Calcutta, it was the protestant Church that began to spread in North Western Part of India. It was well, supported by the British East India Company (Britishers being Protestant) . It was easy for them to reach out to far-flung areas and preach without any fear. (The Dutch and Portuguese were even hostile to each other, so the Dutch didn’t want Roman Catholic Church to flourish in India). Roman Catholic Church couldn’t grow in North India, whereas of the Portuguese Protestant missionaries found their place and were able to spread and flourish in the North- Eastern part of India. The Table below shows the dominance of the Protestant Church in Punjab.

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34

Spread of Christianity in Punjab: An Overview.
Table 2.1.

Various Protestant Missions That Worked in Punjab

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Church</th>
<th>Year of entry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The American Presbyterians</td>
<td>1834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church Missionary Society of England</td>
<td>1840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United Presbyterian (U.P)</td>
<td>1849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglican Church</td>
<td>1850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist Missionary Society</td>
<td>1854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of Scotland</td>
<td>1856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Methodists</td>
<td>1873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army</td>
<td>1883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Society of Propogation of the Gospels</td>
<td>1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reformed Presbyterians</td>
<td>1906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Day Adventists</td>
<td>1913</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Michael Anikuzhikattil, compiled from different sources.*

Nevertheless, it can be said that the Roman Catholic Church had made an impact in the plains of Punjab during the Mughal period i.e. the beginning of the 16th century, while the protestant mission began to spread out from the 19th century. The Church had admittedly made a rapid progress from the 18th century onwards. The Christian could be seen in almost all the villages and towns and cities of Punjab, though in small numbers. Such an assertion is well-supported by the instrumentality of various socio-economic centres which Christian have found throughout the land of Punjab.

2.11. The Partition of Punjab

The partition of the country in 1947, into India and Pakistan, resulted into a tale of death and destruction and above all exodus of the people en masse, both Hindus from Pakistan and Muslims from India. Punjab suffered most grievously as the province was partitioned on the same lines as the country. Christians chose to stay put at their own places in both the countries. They had many established colonies in many places which are now in Pakistan and were in sizeable number in some places76.
The Christians, a neutral entity, played positively a buffer role in the hostilities between the Muslims and the Hindus at the time of the partition\(^77\). They worked untiringly to douse the communal fire and thus averted the massacre of many innocent people. It is even reported that Christians at places formed themselves into a human barrier to prevent Hindus and Muslim from the imminent clashes and the bloodbaths. Wearing the cross, they acted as a human wall and counselled the warring and frenzied factions to cool down\(^78\). At times, they went to the border to facilitate the crossing of the dividing line from one side to the other by Hindus or Muslims. The Christians followed their oral tradition to help create peace and harmony among the people.

The Christians rued the fact of partition because there were many missionaries of different denominations working in undivided Punjab. The Catholic Church was part of the Lahore diocese at the time of Partition, and the Catholic communities in Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Dalhousie were in its ambit. Even after the partition, Indian Punjab was looked after by the missionaries coming from Pakistan, till as long as 1967. Same way, the protestant missionaries were in large number in Indian Punjab, who too did the duty of looking over the protestant beyond the border. Eventually, most of denominations were looked after by the locally appointed pastors in India.

2.12. Contemporary Times

With the partition of Punjab, the demographics of the Christian people was affected, resulting in their concentration in the border belts of Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Ferozepur and Taran Taran districts. With the new development the Christian missionaries, Catholic Church in particular, too were obliged to revamp their organisational structure in Indian Punjab and induct the Indian Missionaries in the task. Rt. Rev. Dr.Symphorian Keeprath, highly esteemed missionary from Kerala, was entrusted with the administration of the newly erected ecclesiastical diocese of Jullundhur. He led the resurgence of the Church with remarkable results.

This celebrated Bishop started with only 13 mission stations, 9 religious priests and 11,220 Catholic followers in the year 1972. But, at the time of his retirement on 15\(^{th}\) March 2006, the estimated population of the Catholic population was 1, 11,010 with 126 educational institutions, 20 dispensaries, 5 hospitals, 4 vocational training centres and non-formal educational centres\(^79\). Many missionaries joined with Bishop Symphorian
and concentrated on the border villages of Punjab where there were no schools or any social work centres. It is because of such wide spread and substantial missionary task that Christian identity is today associated overwhelmingly with the presence of Catholic Church while it was dominated by the various protestant denominations in the 19th century.

**2.13. Contributions of the Christian Missionaries for the development of Punjab**

It is claimed that the Christian missionaries have contributed much to the overall development of Punjab. They ventured into different fields and reached out to the farthest of the villages to bring succour and solace to the native people. It is no mean achievement to breathe a new spirit into the lives of the backward and neglected people in the backward areas of Punjab.

**2.13.1. Education**

The most visible accomplishment of the Christian missionaries which can be unarguably graded as the most significant has been their impact in the field of education. Various educational institutions were opened far and near, primarily to spread education and at the same time to get the people out of the clutches of backwardness. Such a pursuit of removing ignorance is the abiding interest of the Christianity in consonance with the teaching of Jesus Christ. As the missionaries of the various denominations came to Punjab, their priority remained unambiguously similar viz. opening of educational institutions for the general welfare of the people and such institutions have been imparting quality education, both moral and academic, and have deservingly won the generous acclamation all over.

The Ludhiana Mission was established in 1834 with the arrival of the first missionary of the American Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Rev. John C. Lowrie. He opened a high school for boys in 1834, and later its branches were opened at various places in the Ludhiana city. In 1889, the Scottish mission constructed a college named Murray College. The mass movement among the Chuhras in the eighties of the 19th century necessitated the opening of village schools, which were intended primarily to prepare youth of the district for congregations for village and other missionary work. The desired impact of the schools was noticeable among the people
Spread of Christianity in Punjab: An Overview.

of Punjab as they were now able to read and write the vernaculars, and many could speak or read English language as well.

The Ludhiana mission also managed the Forman Christian College at Lahore. The society for the Propagation of the Gospel began their work in Delhi in 1852. In 1877, they opened a college in Delhi called St. Stephen’s College\textsuperscript{82}.

The mission school belonging to the Ludhiana Mission was founded in 1857 by the Rev. Golak Nath as an Anglo-Vernacular High school for imparting education to the people of Jalandhar\textsuperscript{83}.

The pupils of the mission were found in every office in the Punjab, and the first native civil servant of the province was educated in the Mission High School. Two percent of the female population were getting education in Mission Girls’ and Zanana Schools in 1883\textsuperscript{84}.

In 1863, the Christian Vernacular Education Society founded Normal School for men for training teachers, in Amritsar. Students from all Mission and Government schools were welcome, and when trained were sent as teachers all over the Punjab.\textsuperscript{85} The Church of England Mission had a number of girls’ schools in the Amritsar city, and the Alexandra Girls’ School, intended for the education of Christian girls, was under the management of Church of England Mission\textsuperscript{86}. In 1863, a Government School was handed over to the Sialkot mission in Wazirabd\textsuperscript{87}.

The United Presbyterian Church of North America began its missionary work in Gujranwala City in 1863 under the direction of the Rev. J.S. Barr. In this area, the mission maintained twenty primary schools for boys, one middle school for girls, and one industrial school\textsuperscript{88}.

Some of the prestigious protestant educational institutions in Punjab at the present are Baring Union Christian College, Batala, Christian Medical College, Ludhiana, Francis Newton Hospital, Ferozepur, Technical Training Institute in Moga.

Today, the task role of the Christianity is equally shared by the Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries. In fact the Catholic Church has opened many schools, hostels and dispensaries in the interior villages, which has exceptionally helped to raise the literary standard of the people living in Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Ferozepur and Taran Taran districts.
Some missions in Punjab opened boarding schools for the facility of both boys and girls. The Church of England Mission at Narowal (In Sialkot District, Pakistan) had two boarding schools, one for Christian reading up to the middle standard, the other built for the non-Christians studying in any class\(^8^9\). The Zenana Mission at Narowal, founded in 1884 by Miss Clay and Miss Catchpool which is under the orders of Church of England Zenana Missionary Society in London, had a large boarding school meant for the empowerment of women giving them special training in the household duties along with proper education\(^9^0\). A Christian Boys’ boarding school was transferred from Lahore to Ludhiana in 1877. The London society for the promotion of the female education in the East started a large boarding school for girls in 1834, with the view to train native Christian girls as teachers\(^9^1\). The Church Missionary Society in Lahore established, in 1873, a boarding school for the girls in Naulakha (Lahore). The purpose of this boarding school was to train the girls as teachers and secondly to impart a sound English and vernacular education to the girls\(^9^2\).

Even today, hostels are run by the missionaries for the education of the rural children in cities and villages in Punjab, like Batala, Dhariwal, Gurdaspur, Moga, Jalandhar, Ferozepur, Ludhiana and other places.

2.13.2. Literature

Not only did the Christian missionaries do the pioneering work in the field of education in Punjab, but their missionary activities impacted both the language and literature in no small measure. It is acknowledged that many Western scholars and especially the protestant pastors introduced the Punjabi script, language (grammar and dictionary) and folk literature to the outside world\(^9^3\).

Since the foreign missionaries were in need of an intelligible medium to put across the teachings of Jesus Christ to the people, they thought of the folk literature to be the most effective tool. A methodical collection of Punjabi folk literature was started in right earnest and was translated into English for greater and broader access across the world. In the like manner, Punjabis also got to know the Western thought either through translation or as made available in English through the various missionaries.

In order to facilitate the things, a typewriter for Gurumukhi alphabets was prepared under the guidance of a famous missionary named William Carey. In 1834,
Pastor John Lowrie, established associated Presbyterian Mission in Ludhiana. From 1837 to 1849, about two dozen books and thousands of Tracts (Booklets) were published by this centre\(^{94}\). In 1858, John Banian got published a novel, Pilgrim’s Progress, in Punjabi under the heading of “Musafar di Yatra”\(^{95}\). The first and the original novel Jyotirday’ (the origin of light) of 144 pages was written by the Christian missionaries. It was published by Punjab Religious Book Society in 1882 in the printing press established by the Christian missionaries in Ludhiana. The basic aim of the novel was to propagate the teachings of Jesus Christ\(^{96}\). In 1887, missionary Trump translated the elementary Raags of the Adi Granth, the Holy Book of the Sikh religion into English\(^{97}\).

In the bargain, Punjabi literature also gained much about the models of the different genres of literature like short poems, short stories, novels and one-act plays, from the classical European literature. Many books by English writers about Punjabi literature, either in translation of the original collections or their critical commentaries, gave it a wider reach.

John Abbot, in his essay ‘on the Ballads and legends of the Punjab’ published in ‘Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, in 1854, started it all. Mrs. Steel and Sir. Richard Temple published ‘Folklore in the Punjab’ and ‘Tales of the Punjab’ respectively in 1880 -1883\(^{98}\). Similarly, Swinton got published ‘Romantic Tales from Punjab and Frederick Charles did ‘Punjab Folk Tales and Proverbs’ in 1905\(^{99}\). ‘Legends of Punjab’ in three volumes by Sir. Richard Temple was yet one more significant work published.

2.13.3. Punjabi Language

Since the missionaries felt the need to take the message of Christianity to the Punjabi people in their own language, it became imperative for them to know the language and make it equally familiar to others of their kind. In order to get familiar with the Punjabi language Rev. Levi Janvier, a Gurumukhi Punjabi scholar helped much to get the first Punjabi dictionary published on March 24, 1864. He was killed by a Sikh faquir, mistakenly\(^{100}\). Earlier, he had got one Punjabi-English dictionary published with the help of another missionary and scholar, Newton, published in 1854 by the Ludhiana Mission Press. Lieutenant Leech got some essays regarding Punjabi grammar published by the General Asiatic society in 1932. Newton also prepared a manual of Punjabi grammar\(^{101}\). In 1889, one novel, Musafir Di Yatra was written by one John Banian, a
Christian missionary. The book aimed at spreading the message of Christianity across to the Punjabi people.

2.13.4. Health Care

As in the educational field, equally laudable programme was initiated by various Christian missionaries for the health care of the people in general in both the urban and rural areas. The perusal of the records of the various missions in Punjab shows the opening of the dispensaries in their localities and to very good effect. The Scottish church started a dispensary in Sialkot in 1873\textsuperscript{102}.

In the like manner Church missionary society, Roman Catholic Mission, American Presbyterian Church, a branch of Ludhiana Mission and The American Mission did a commendable job, opened a number of health care units (dispensaries) to take care of the health and well being of the people. Though these units were initially started in make shift premises and rented accommodation, they continued their humanitarian task uncomplicatedly. Some of these units developed into famous Hospital as the one run by F.J. Newton in Ferozepur district, or Sacred Heart Hospital at Jalandhar\textsuperscript{103}.

2.13.5. Inculturation

The interaction between the Christian missionaries and the natives of Punjab, the meeting of the two cultures has naturally had a mutually edifying and assimilating impact. It may not be easy to gauge the influence on the face of the things, but the effects seep deep enough imperceptibly and over considerably long periods of time and cause a shift in the outlook of life and living. Such has been the case in Punjab too.

2.14. A Reality Check: An interaction with the Christians–the Ground Realities

As we have structured a general narrative of the growth and development of the Christianity in Punjab so far, our efforts in the second part will focus on the present status of the Christians, the various interplaying factors shaping their life and existence-their ambience in totality. Some pertinent queries were put across to a wide spectrum of Christians of various denominations and at different places. The response-base findings lead us to the reality check.
Invariably, the respondents were asked to recall when they embraced Christianity or when did they begin to practise Christian religion. A total number of 360 people were approached to get their response. Among the respondents 273 (75.84 per cent) replied that they were born in a Christian family and therefore from the time of Grandfather or Great grand father they have been Christians (Table 2.2). Among 30 (8.33 per cent) respondents said that they were Christian from their father’s time and 21 (5.83 per cent) did not reply at all. 36 (10 per cent) person said that they were Christian from the present generation itself. One of the respondents in village Karyal said that “I am a Christian because of my conviction. I passed my matriculation in 1962 and was offered post of sub–inspector in police, if I changed my name and religion and wrote scheduled caste as my religion. I did not do so because of my faith in Jesus”. Of course, such is an exceptional case.

**Table 2.2.**

*Respondent’s Response to the Embracing of Christianity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>From own Generation</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>From the time of Father</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>From the time of Grandfather/Great Grandfather</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>75.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>360</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.3.**

*Reasons for Being a Christian*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Material Benefits</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Religious Convictions</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>86.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Social Status</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Going Abroad</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Material Benefits &amp; Religious Convictions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Religious Convictions &amp; Social Status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Any Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>360</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of the respondents, that is, 313 (86.94 percent) responded that they are Christians due to the religious conviction and faith they have in the Lord Jesus Christ. 18 (5 per cent) of them due to the material benefits they received from the missionaries (Table 2.3). 2 (0.56 per cent) of them specified that it’s because of social status i.e. social identify and self-esteem, 2 (0.56 per cent) for going abroad, 1 (0.28 per cent) for religions conviction and material benefits, 1 (0.28 per cent) for religious conviction and social status, 4 (1.10 per cent) some ulterior motives and 19 (5.28 per cent) respondents did not answer anything at all. This study gets a feel of the real motive of faith people had in the religion. This also disproves the accusation that the Christians are using material benefits to lure people towards Christianity.

Table 2.4.

Religious Practices among the Christians.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Religious Practices</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>36.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>On Festivals</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>56.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>360</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked about their religious practices 131 (36.38 per cent) respondents said that they went regularly to the church i.e. mostly on Sunday worship (Table 2.4). (5 per cent) of respondents said that they occasionally visited the church. 203 (56.39 per cent) respondents went to church only on particular days like Christmas, Easter, and Feast of the church, Pastoral Visit of the Bishop or on any such special occasion. Among the studied household only one answered that he never practiced the Christian religion.

Table 2.5.

Marriage of Children within the Christian Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Marriage</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>360</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When the people were asked about the community in which they would marry their children, it was reported that 100 per cent of the respondents were interested in marrying their children within the Christian community only. Earlier there used to be intra–denominational marriages and it was a well-accepted custom and tradition. But the trend today is to prefer marriage in the same denomination than in any other. Even if the intra–denomination marriage takes place, the girl adjusts herself to the new ways of worship and religious practices. The customs and traditions prevailing in the villages are that the boy and girl of the village are considered as brother and sister in the same sub sect.

Table 2.6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Increasing</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>93.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Decreasing</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>360</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A survey of Christian population was done in the studied villages 337 (93.61 per cent) replied that Christian population is increasing. While 16 (4.45 per cent) respondents replied negatively stating that Christian population in the villages is decreasing due to the people migrating from rural to the urban areas, because of the socio–economic mobility which is taking place. 7 (1.94 per cent) respondents did not respond. The decrease was attributed firstly to the passive attitude of the community leaders, favouritism, jealously and sometimes violence. And secondly to the reservation policy of the government, the benefits, which are bestowed upon the schedule castes and scheduled tribes. On the contrary, some believed that break up of the joint family system has led to the growth in the number of Christians subsequently. Some said that the opening of the mission schools and social activity centres of the church has led to the growth of the community in the villages.
There are various factors that are believed to have led to the growth of Christian communities in these villages. Among the 18 villages studied 95 (26.39 per cent) respondents said that it was due to the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Table 2.7); 12 (3.33 per cent) respondents answered that it was due to the rituals and religious prayer; while 47 (13.06 per cent) believed the increase in the family population; 15 (4.17 per cent) due to the healing and miracles which happened during the Bible convention and prayer meetings; 3 (0.83 per cent) responded that it was due to the missionary effort i.e. through opening of new schools and social work and various development works initiated by the church related organization; 11 (3.04 per cent) replied that because of the strong foundation in the faith through catechetical teaching; while 7 (1.95 per cent) responded that because of the forgiveness of sin they experienced through confession and because of experience of an inner faith and love; 140 (38.89 per cent) responded that the increase in the number was because of the faith in the Lord that was handed over to them from generation to generation while 16 (4.45 per cent) of respondents were unable to spell out the reasons for the increase of Christian population in the villages.
Table 2.8.

Role of the Churches and Other Institutions - Social, Religious, Educational or Health Services Benefiting the Christians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Giving Employment</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>To Meet God</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>33.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Improve the Economic Condition</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Instrument of Social Change</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Produce Good Leadership</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Providing Education</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>18.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Any other Benefit You Think</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>No Benefits at all</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>360</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The query regarding the role of Church in social, educational, religious and health services benefitting the Christians was variously responded. The response measures up the functioning of the Church ministry to a sizeable extent. The table provides an interesting reading. With majority of the people, it is the benefits to their faith as Christians that is the major service role of the Churches.

119 (33.05 per cent) opined that through the Church they were able to experience the powerful presence of God and learned to live with God in daily lives (Table 2.8). Educational benefits have been the second important factor with 68 (18.89 percent) listing it as positive contribution. Their children would never have got education had this benefit not been extended by the Church. 28 (7.78 per cent) respondents’ opinion was that the church was instrumental in raising the living standard of the people and 27 (7.51 per cent) said that they experienced the social change much more than anything else. It is only 22 (6.11 per cent) respondents who responded that they did not experience any benefit or help from the Church’s socio-political activities while 17 (4.72 per cent) respondents stated that they were getting the benefits of socio-economic activities of the Church. However, 47 (13.05 percent) persons did not respond.
Table 2.9

Respondents Response to the Activities of the Church

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Self-group</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>30.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Youth Group</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Prayer Group</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Maria Sena</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Self-group and Youth Group</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Self-group and Prayer Group</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Self-group and Maria Sena</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Youth group and Maria Sena</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>16.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>360</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Church has undertaken various pro-active socio-economic programmes not only for the economic upliftment of the poor people but also to inculcate a sense of the mutual bonding of the community at social level. These result-oriented activities of various self-help groups have helped the community people to better their prospects and also made them self-reliant.

Most visible self-awareness can be found among the women groups. They have not only got a sense of belonging but also gained self-esteem through empowerment. There are around 368 self-help groups in different villages of Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts. Their activities are looked after by an NGO called “Navajeewan Charitable Society” (Reg.). This awareness is spreading through the different villages of Punjab. The target to be achieved in the year 2009 to 2010 approximately is to estimated 700 groups in various villages.

Diocese of Jalandhar has started an association called CYD,( Catholic Youth Dhara) to bring and promote leadership among the Christian youth. Maria Sena is an association exclusively for the empowerment of women in religious and social work.
2.15. Impact of Self-groups and Status of Women

The most perceptible impact of these self-help groups formed under the broader programme of rejuvenating and resurrecting the basic tenets of Christianity on the whole has been really heart-warming. They have brought about a sea change in the outlook of the Christians themselves form a pensive, and a passive attitude into a fresh and vibrant hopefulness.

The malaise that had set in the body-social political and religious of the community has been addressed with precision. First and foremost is putting a stop to the exploitation of women, and changing their miserable status. Women groups comprising of 15 to 20 well-meaning and knowledgeable persons work as vigilant in spreading awareness among people and preventing any maltreatment of women. Many programmes a sort of co-operative economic venture have been launched to bring some economic security and independence to women.

Small bank loans have been made available to them to release them from the clutches of cruel money lenders. Bonded labourers have been got released from big landlords in the border belt of Punjab. Women are fighting the menace of drugs of alcohol which ruin the lives of many people.

Apart from social and economic fronts, these self-help groups educate the community members and bring them political awareness. Such awareness has given a huge boost to the status of the people in general. The political consciousness has brought them a host of basic facilities (their fundamental human rights) which were overlooked by the powers that be, in the past. Panchayat elections and their management are cognizable examples.

As a result of the concerted efforts of these voluntary groups, a lot of change has been effected in the overall scenario of the Christian community. No doubt, they have gained much in status in every aspect of their lives, yet much needs to be done.

Conclusion

In nutshell, we have tried to trace the history of the beginning, spread and growth of Christianity in India in general, and Punjab in particular. It is quite evident that the
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The seed of Christian faith was sown in our land by one of the apostles of Jesus himself, St. Thomas. With the death of St. Thomas, the religion did not die, but it began to sprout and develop in the whole country with the arrival of foreign missionaries with untiring enthusiasm and uncompromising commitment.

Initially, the missionaries underwent tremendous difficulties and to translate the Christian faith to the local people particularly from the lower strata of the society who were illiterate. When it came to undivided Punjab, it was a man called Ditt, from Chuhras community who stood firm and committed in the new found faith which led to the growth of Christianity in the villages of Punjab. Gradually, the contact of the missionaries, more people from the other communities began to embrace Christianity.

The history of Christian community in Punjab is history of growth and development of a new mindset. From modest beginning Christianity has grown into a sizeable strength.

Missionaries have contributed greatly for the growth and development of Punjabi literature and the language, and promoted the spread of education and emancipation of women. Special attention is given to the women in the villages to get them educated and organize them in different ways, and bring awareness that they are created in the image and likeness of God.

The second part of the chapter deals with the reality of the Christians in the villages, in other words, their actual living conditions and their religious practices. One thing that comes out very strongly is that people did not embrace Christianity because of the material benefits they enjoyed from the missionaries, but because of the strong religious conviction they do have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we analyse the working of the Church in the present age and time, it is very clear that things are progressing on the right path. The Church is trying its best with the resources available with to bring up the community of the Christians in the socio-political aspects. The missionaries are working with a high commitment and a clear vision for the upliftment of the deprived and the marginalised people.
END NOTE


7. Ibid, p.34.


22. E.M Philip, n.19, p.150.


Chalcedon, sometimes was an ancient maritime city of Bithynia, in Asia Minor, almost directly opposite Byzantius, south of Scutari (modern Uskudar). It is now district of the city of Istanbul named Karikoy.

Nestorianism is a form of neo-physitism, and can be seen as the antithesis to monophysitism, which emerged in reaction to Nestorianism. Where Nestorianism holds that Christ had two loosely-united natures, divine and human, monophysitism holds that he had but a singly nature, his human nature being absorbed into his divinity.


Church tradition maintains that the See of Antioch was founded by Saint Peter the Apostle, who came to Antioch to spread the message of Jesus in A. D. 37. Later it came to be known as the Church of the East. Peter after spending 7 years in Antioch went to Rome and spread the good news.


Jacob Kollaparambil, n.30, p.56.

My visit to Pakistan, 28 Feb, 2005.


Benedit Vadakkara, n.14, p. 159.


Daniel D’souza, n. 40, p. 3.
The term Franciscan is most commonly used to refer to members of Catholic religious order, founded by St. Francis of Assisi on 3rd October, 1226.

Dominicans are a religious order founded by St. Dominic on 22nd December, 1216 in the Catholic Church.


Leslie Brown, n.25, p.97.


Joseph Thekkedath, n.8, p. 427; John Rooney n.37, p. 31.

Michel Anikuzhikattil, n.38, p. 98.


Ibid, p.103.

Joseph Thekkedeth, n. 8, p. 433. It is said that the emperor sealed the outside of his official documents with the seals bearing representation of Christ and the Virgin Mary, p. 431. In the year 1610 three Princess of royal blood, sons of his deceased brother Daniel were baptised by Fr. Jerome Xavier.


Leo, n. 49, p. 13.


Leo, n. 49, pp.26 -27.


*Census of India*, 1981.


Andrew Gorden, n.67, pp. 173-182.

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74 Khushwant Singh, n.72, pp. 138-139.
75 Thomas Thayil, n.12, p.15.
76 In Pakistan, Christians have many established Christian colonies like Mariamabad, Anthoniabad, Franciscabad etc.
77 Interview with Faiju Masih at Kot Sidhu village in Karyal, who was 84 years old at the time of interview and also he witnessed the partition of Punjab.
78 The oral tradition among the villages are that they were encouraged being a Christian, to continue to live in the border belt so that they could bring peace and harmony among the two fighting communities.
84 Gazetteer of the Ludhiana District, 1888-89, p.75.
86 Ibid, p.54.
89 Gazetteer of the Sialkot District, n.80, p.58.
91 Gazetteer of the Ludhiana District, n.81, pp.75-77.
95 Andrew Gordon, n. 67, p. 236.
96 Rajinder Singh Shekhon, n. 94, p. 408.
97 Jit Sital Singh and Mewa Singh Sindhu, n. 93, p. 601.
98 Ibid, p.599.
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100 Loehlin, n.73, p.193.

101 Jit Sital Singh and Mewa Singh Sindhu, n.93 p. 600, Loehlin n.73, p.193.

102 *Gazetteer of Sialkot District* 1883-84, n.86, p.38.

103 *Gazetteer of the Chenab Clolony* 1904, p.163; *Gazetteer of Ferozepur District* 1883-84; p.42, *Gazetteer of the Ludhiana District* 1888-89, p.76.