

# From Basle into the world: The significance of the German Christian Society in Basle and her daughter societies for the rise of interest in protestant missions between 1785 and 1835

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## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die Mitglieder der Deutschen Christentumsgesellschaft im schweizerischen Basel und ihrer Partikulargesellschaften waren nicht die einzigen Christen, die die Impulse der aufbrechenden englischen Missionsbewegung am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts auf dem europäischen Festland aufnahmen. Aber mit Sicherheit befand sich die Mehrzahl der Missionsförderer im Umkreis dieser Christentumsgesellschaft. Erst ab 1796 wird das Thema „Mission“ in Basel prominent, als der Gesellschaftssekretär C.F.A. Steinkopf Kontakte nach England aufnahm. Missionsinteressierte junge Männer rekrutierten sich aus Süddeutschland und aus dem Basler Jünglingsverein. Sie

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## SUMMARY

At the end of the eighteenth century, the members of the German Christian Society in Basle (Switzerland) and members of its affiliate societies on the European continent welcomed the ideas of the beginning British missionary movement. However, the majority of supporters of mission were certainly found in the circle of the Basle Society. From 1796, „mission“ became prominent in Basle due to the initiative of the Society's secretary C.F.A. Steinkopf in contacting British Christian Societies. Young men interested in becoming missionaries came from Southern Germany and from the Basle Young

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## RÉSUMÉ

À la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, les membres de la société chrétienne germanique de Bâle et ceux des sociétés affiliées n'ont pas été les seuls sur le continent européen à accueillir favorablement les idées nouvelles du mouvement missionnaire britannique. La majorité des soutiens de l'entreprise missionnaire gravitait néanmoins dans la sphère de la société de Bâle. La mission y était deve-

lue d'abord par la Mission Jaenicke à Berlin et par la Société Missionnaire Néerlandaise, puis, plus tard, par la Mission de Basle. – La fondation de sociétés missionnaires allemandes dans la première moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle montre clairement la position clé de la Société Missionnaire de Basle dans ce processus et de la société locale chrétienne qui la soutenait. Les membres des sociétés chrétiennes formaient un lien entre le vieux piétisme du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle et le mouvement de réveil dans la première moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. La promotion de la mission, à côté de la construction d'églises et de la publication de tracts et de livres, est devenue un nouveau domaine principal de travail pour les sociétés chrétiennes.

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Men's Association. Initially they were sent abroad by the Jaenicke Mission in Berlin or by the Dutch Missionary Society, later by the recently founded Basle Missionary Society. – The foundation of German missionary societies in the first half of the nineteenth century demonstrates the key position of the Basle Mission Society and that of local Christian societies supporting it in this process. The members of the Christian societies form a link between the older Pietism of the eighteenth century and the Revival Movement in the first half of the nineteenth. Next to Christian edification and the publication of pious tracts and books, the promotion of mission became a new main area of work for the Societies.

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nue importante à partir de 1796, grâce à l'initiative de C.F.A. Steinkopf, alors secrétaire général de la société de Bâle, qui avait pris contact avec les sociétés chrétiennes britanniques. Des jeunes gens motivés pour la mission vinrent du sud de l'Allemagne et de l'Association des Jeunes Hommes de Bâle. Au début, ils furent envoyés à l'étranger par la Mission Jaenicke de Berlin ou par la Société Missionnaire Hollandaise, puis, par la suite, par la Société Missionnaire de Bâle récemment fondée. Dans la



création de sociétés missionnaires germaniques au cours de la première moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle se manifeste clairement la position clé de la Société Missionnaire de Bâle et celle des sociétés chrétiennes locales qui la soutenaient. Les membres de ces sociétés chrétiennes constituent un

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What is the contribution of the activities of the German Christian Society (*Deutsche Christentumsgesellschaft*) in Basle (Switzerland) and of its sister societies in Germany and abroad to the new interest in protestant missions at the turn of the nineteenth century? To clarify this, we need to have a look at the prehistory of missionary enterprises that started within Germany.

In the eighteenth century, only the Missionary Society Halle-Denmark and the Brethren Mission (Herrnhut) were engaged in intercultural missionary activities. Statistics show the limited size of these movements compared to the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century, *Halle* sent about 60 missionaries to one location only, the Danish colonies in Tranquebar (India). Missionary efforts seem to have decreased as early as the last quarter of the century.<sup>1</sup> The contribution of *Herrnhut* was larger: 226 missionaries were sent abroad before 1760, the year of Zinzendorf's death.<sup>2</sup> This means that in mission history until 1800 Halle was rather insignificant; Herrnhut demonstrated more strength but only Brethren congregations knew about the activities of the Brethren missions. For example, around 1800 the Basle Brethren Society relates the following about its "reading sessions":<sup>3</sup>

Written sermons from the Brethren Church [Herrnhut] and also written accounts from the mission field and from congregations were read in these congregations. Since they were confidential, they were destined only for the members of the [Brethren] Society. Whereas later other organisations tried to get ever more publicity for reports from the mission field, the Brethren Church at that time was very restrictive. Count Zinzendorf had warned against bringing these accounts out in the open. To be convinced, the world would ask for something brilliant, for large successes, and the Church would be urged to leave her original intention.

In the province Basel-Land the Herrnhut readings sessions disappeared after about 1840, due to the fact that Christian weekly papers and mission brochures became available

in all houses,... so there was plenty of reading

lien entre le piétisme du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle et les mouvements de réveil du XIX<sup>e</sup>. Avec l'édification des chrétiens et la publication de traités et de livres encourageant la piété, la promotion de l'œuvre missionnaire était devenue l'une des activités principales de ces sociétés.

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material, which in former times had almost exclusively been passed on by written church communications. Apart from these, people could get only little or no information about missions and the Kingdom of God. Interested persons had to participate in the reading sessions.<sup>4</sup>

This means that at the end of the eighteenth century, Halle and Herrnhut had little or no influence on promoting missions in orthodox, pietistic or rationalist groups in the German state churches.

Statistics for the nineteenth century show significantly better numbers. The small Missions Training Institute of Johannes Jaenicke in Berlin trained 80 missionaries in 28 years.<sup>5</sup> Between 14 and 25 applicants got a place every year at the Basle Missions Institute; in 1882 statistics show a total of 1112 students until then.<sup>6</sup> In its first fifty years (1840-1890), the Pilgrims' Mission St. Chrischona near Basle trained 517 students to serve in missions abroad, at home and among settlers in the United States; their wives are not included in these statistics. Numbers for other mission societies, for example the Leipzig Society and the Rhenish Mission Society, have to be added. Thus a substantially larger number of Protestants was engaged in missions than in the eighteenth century.

### 1. Mission in the context of pietistic Basle before the foundation of the German Christian Society

Mission among non-Christians does not play an important part in the life of Revd Hieronymus Annoni (1697-1770), the most important Basle Pietist of the eighteenth century. In July 1736, Annoni visited Francke's Institutions in Halle and got to know Johann Heinrich Callenberg and his *Institutum Judaicum et Muhammedanicum*, opened in 1728.<sup>7</sup> However, on returning to his parish in Switzerland his interest was limited primarily to mission among the Jews. He passed on tracts and printed news from Halle to colleagues and lay people in the parish. Occasional visits from representatives of Callenberg's Institute strength-



ened Basle's relationship to this mission. The Basle researcher Hildegard Gantner-Schlee assumes that Annoni's specific interest in mission to the Jews was stimulated by his travels in 1736.<sup>8</sup> Touring continental Europe, he visited Jewish quarters and synagogues in larger towns of Germany and the Netherlands. Despite his stay in Halle, he never mentions the Halle mission to Tranquebar.

Nevertheless, in his will Annoni remembered not only the Institutum Judaicum but also the Malabar Institutions of Gotthilf August Francke. His library of books on mission to the Jews he gave to the Christian Society of good Friends to serve as a lending library in 1756.<sup>9</sup> The stated aims of this pietistic society included the distribution of good books and tracts, as well as aid to persons in need and missions. Annoni and his friends had decided "to help also others who are engaged in spreading the Kingdom of Jesus Christ far away, among heathens, Jews, Turks and sectarian Christians".<sup>10</sup> Sette Spittler relates that Annoni was commissioned by the Society of Friends to correspond with Halle and Augsburg so that he could pass on "news from the Kingdom of God" to be used for intercessory prayer. In addition to news from Salzburg migrants to North America and from Christian orphanages, the *Institutum Judaicum* and Franckes *News from East India* are mentioned.<sup>11</sup> Thus before the foundation of the German Christian Society, Basle Pietism already shows an interest in missions and in intercession for missionary work in Tranquebar and among Jews, but we know nothing about more far-reaching engagement in missions.

## 2. Promoting missions after the foundation of the German Christian Society

Originally a commitment to mission was not among the objectives of the Basle Christian Society which was established in 1780. Over the years its aims were interpreted differently by its successive directors ("secretaries") and it was only Carl Friedrich Adolf Steinkopf and Christian Gottlieb Blumhardt who actively promoted missions.

When in 1779-1780 Johann August Urlsperger, the initiator of the Society, made his 16-months promotional tour through Europe he concentrated his concern for the new Society on two objectives: promoting "pure doctrine" over against modernism and strengthening true piety through exchange of information about events in the Kingdom of God. Urlsperger's 1779 keynote text mentions

among the main objectives of the Society that was to be formed "everything... which promotes the Kingdom of God and which is especially necessary for the days we live in". By this he meant orthodox doctrine, efforts to investigate and distribute the word of God, and paying attention to "what persons, doctrines and institutions might be either useful or detrimental to the Kingdom of God in all countries and nations..."<sup>12</sup> This information should be distributed by appropriate publications, especially by means of the Society's own newspaper.<sup>13</sup>

From the outset the objectives of the Society were formulated in an interdenominational and worldwide perspective on the Kingdom of God, so with mission clearly in view.<sup>14</sup> Yet exchange with Christians of all denominations was more prominent than mission. In particular, the aim was to support institutions that maintained and defended orthodox Christianity. Pure doctrine and godly life, Christian theory and praxis should be mutually stimulating.<sup>15</sup> Examples for this intention were found in the British Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK, founded 1698) and in the Swedish *Societas Svecana pro Fide et Christianismo* (founded 1771).<sup>16</sup> Urlsperger is more interested in getting to know true Christians in different countries than in missions:

... true Christians in every place should find more opportunities to love one another, to serve the awakening of each other, to pray for one another, to counsel one another and to contribute with joint efforts to a coherent building of the Kingdom of God in all countries (but completely without trouble or coercion).<sup>17</sup>

The modification of the objectives of the Society in October 1785 brought about the abandonment of the illusory idea of fighting modernism by appropriate means such as statements of conservative theologians,<sup>18</sup> but even after this date mission is not promoted more vigorously. The focus is on spiritual and devotional issues, on support of the piety of the members in the local groups related with the Basle Society by means of correspondence and exchange of news concerning the Kingdom of God.<sup>19</sup>

### Steinkopf and the London Missionary Society

The situation changed after 1796, when Carl Friedrich Adolf Steinkopf was director of the Basle Christian Society.<sup>20</sup> In 1795, the London Missionary Society (LMS) was set up and this news spread



to the continent. Steinkopf contacted England and the British founders of the LMS were looking for friends in Europe.<sup>21</sup> In this way, a missionary society, the Nederlandsche Zending Genootschap (NZG) was formed in the Netherlands in 1797. Because of his interest in mission, August Carl Friedrich von Schirnding in Dobrilugk / Doberlug (Brandenburg) became one of the (corresponding) directors of LMS, like the Basle professor of theology Johann Wernhard Herzog before him and Steinkopf after him. Schirnding entrusted the Berlin pastor Johannes Jaenicke with the task of training young men interested in mission, subsidising the small institution and raising funds for it as well as for the Basle Christian Society.

The awakening of interest in mission in Basle is reflected in the circular letters of the Society and in the small monthly devotional journal *Collections for lovers of Christian truth and piety* (*Sammlungen für Liebhaber christlicher Wahrheit und Gottseligkeit*). These printed publications communicate the issue to related societies in other locations, mostly in Germany and Switzerland. The first three years (1783-1785)<sup>22</sup> report "news about the progress of Christianity in many regions". However, the areas mentioned are mainly German national states and occasionally Austria. Very rarely news appears from the Netherlands, from German colonies on the Wolga River, from Sweden, Finland and the USA.<sup>23</sup> The issues of the *Collections* from 1786 relate little more about "events from the Kingdom of God". Two Halle missionaries among Jews in Prague were imprisoned and set free, and some letters from the USA are printed.<sup>24</sup> Amsterdam and the Lutheran Church in that town receive attention; Johann Tobias Kießling, a merchant from Nuremberg and friend of the Basle Society, gives accounts of his business trips to Austrian markets.<sup>25</sup> Yet trans-cultural missions beyond Europe and countries of emigration are no point of concern.

In 1797, issue 4 of the *Collections* reports the foundation of the LMS in 1795 under the heading "Important news from the Kingdom of God". The following issues regularly contain news from British and Dutch missions. In 1800, regular contributions begin under the heading "News from missions".<sup>26</sup> After Steinkopf was elected pastor of the German Lutheran Savoy Church in London in 1801, news about missions multiplied under the supervision of his successor Christian Gottlieb Blumhardt, who would later become the first director of Basle Mission.<sup>27</sup>

In the four volumes of the *Collections* that came from his pen between 1803 and 1807 "news from the Kingdom of God", interpreted primarily as news from the mission field, made up about a third of the journal. No region, no important event in mission, was omitted from his thorough reports.<sup>28</sup>

After 1815, Blumhardt continued his journalistic efforts as director of the Basle Mission in the *Evangelisches Missionsmagazin* and in the *Jahresberichte*.

### From Berlin to Basle

During the economic blockade of Napoleon's continental system between 1806 and 1814, connections between the LMS and its friends on the continent were almost completely broken off. Instead, the Basle Christian Society increasingly supported the Mission Training Institute of Jaenicke in Berlin and, to a lesser extent, also the Herrnhut mission and the NZG with funds and young men interested in becoming missionaries.<sup>29</sup> Previously Schirnding in Doberlug had tried to find supporters for founding and subsidising a German Missionary Institute. Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling from Marburg and a member of the Christian Society in Frankfurt, Johann Jakob Wiertz, wrote letters to the Committee of the Basle Society to win them for the Berlin Institute.<sup>30</sup> Wiertz forwarded a letter of Schirnding to Basle in which the latter had laid down "private thoughts about mission" and a "Missionary Instruction according to which the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST has to be communicated amongst the heathen".<sup>31</sup> In 1801, Jaenicke for the first time expressed his thanks for the donations collected in a letter, taking the opportunity to introduce himself and his work to those in Basle and all Switzerland.<sup>32</sup> In the period between the establishment of the Basle Mission in 1815 and Jaenicke's death in 1827, the Basle Christian Society subsidised the Mission Society in Berlin.<sup>33</sup>

### Württemberg Pietists in Swiss Basle

Blumhardt whole-heartedly promoted missions and he was the mediator between interested persons from Switzerland and Southern Germany on the one hand and Berlin on the other.<sup>34</sup> Sending a number of young men from the friends of the Society established personal links between Basle and Jaenicke's Mission Institute. The Society's archives and the Spittler Archive contain letters from a number of such early nineteenth century



persons, and I want to introduce two of them who are representative, Leopold Butscher and Johann Christoph Supper.<sup>35</sup>

Johann Christoph Supper was born in the small town of Göppingen (Württemberg) and arrived at the Berlin Mission Institute on November 12, 1807. In an undated letter from Berlin, he and his seven colleagues pour their hearts out to Spittler about their training by Jaenicke. They complain about the “alarming situation” of the education: “We have had no theological instruction so far.”<sup>36</sup> It seems that most of Jaenicke’s classes were exercises in preaching.<sup>37</sup> After 1808, we find Supper in the Netherlands; from 1814, he serves with the NZG as a missionary in Indonesia.<sup>38</sup>

Leopold Butscher from Überlingen, South Germany, came to Basle as an apprentice in tailoring in 1801. Here he was a member of the Assembly of Unmarried Brethren. In 1803, he sent his CV from Berlin to C.G. Blumhardt in Basle, asking for it and subsequent letters to be circulated during the meetings of the Unmarried Brethren to update their knowledge about the missionary’s career and for prayer.<sup>39</sup> From 1806 until his death in 1817, Butscher served with the Church Missionary Society in Sierra Leone. In 1819, as a fruit of their common efforts, his colleague Johnson reported to England that the large number of 226 persons had become or were Christians.<sup>40</sup>

### Local Christian societies engaging in missions

Interest in mission worldwide was not only kindled in the Basle Assembly of Unmarried Brethren. It is characteristic for this stage of early mission publicity starting from Basle that it met with enthusiastic responses in local Christian societies that were in touch with the Basle Committee. Not after but before the foundation of the Basle Mission Institute, offertory boxes were ordered, groups for support and intercession were formed, and regular collections organised.

In a letter to its friends in the Netherlands, the LMS had suggested holding prayer meetings for the promotion of missions on the first Monday of every month between 8.00 and 9.00 p.m., synchronised with English Christians. These meetings should not only be used to pass on news about mission, but also to raise interest of Christians in prayer *and* giving for the missionary cause.<sup>41</sup> These “Mission Mondays” with collection, news and prayer became a regular institution of the Basle Christian Society and other local Christian societies.<sup>42</sup>

Christians in the local groups understood themselves as a network of “corresponding Pietists”.<sup>43</sup> This system functioned not only for questions of pious edification but also in support of mission. In 1799, Christian Gottlob Pregizer of Haiterbach, a leading Württemberg Pietist, reported to Steinkopf in Basle a strong positive response to English missionary news that had reached the province of Württemberg via Basle. The Haiterbach Pietists collected more than 40 guilders “to contribute our mite to the blessed Mission Institute”.<sup>44</sup> In 1809, Alexander Beck from the Schaffhausen Christian Society in Switzerland wrote that they had begun a box for donations to missionary purposes.<sup>45</sup> In December 1801, Steinkopf presented the LMS in London with 450 guilders, in 1812 even with 550 guilders.<sup>46</sup>

### 3. Mission after the foundation of the Basle Mission Institute in 1815

The foundation of a missionary society was suggested as early as 1783. The idea occurs, next to that of a committee and the publication of devotional periodical and books, in the correspondence between the Basle group and some Tübingen friends of the Society, conservative professors of theology and members of the Württemberg church board but they did not follow up this idea.<sup>47</sup> The Basle Mission historian Ostertag dates the first time C.F. Spittler thought about opening a Basle Mission School to 1806 or 1807. There were many positive arguments in favour of Basle as location and Spittler’s six arguments are important for the promotion of European missionary interest in later years:

- Basle is a better location than German towns, “especially in the contemporary political situation”<sup>48</sup>
- the Basle office of the Society is already the focal point of a network of Christian fellowship and of actions “in all countries”
- the periodical *Collections* are widespread, they can raise and promote interest in mission
- the numerous donations for mission which arrive frequently can also be used locally
- in Basle missionaries can be trained even better than in Berlin – the poor quality of Jaenicke’s missionary training was mentioned above<sup>49</sup>
- having a larger number of mission societies does not mean that they will compete with each other. The need for missionaries is much



larger than the number trained and sent out at the moment.

### Publishing on behalf of missions

Once the Missionary Society (1815) and the Basle Missions Training Institute (1816) were established, publications about missions multiplied. Annual reports appeared in the *Collections* as well as separately. In 1816, the scholarly *Magazine for the most recent history of protestant Mission and Bible Societies* (*Magazin für die neueste Geschichte der evangelischen Missions- und Bibelgesellschaften*) began, in 1828 *The Evangelical Messenger to the Heathen* (*Der Evangelische Heidenbote*).<sup>50</sup> The *Missionary Magazine* was published so that "friends of Christianity may get complete and continuous news about the causes of mission and Bible".<sup>51</sup> The title of the magazine, "for Mission Societies and Bible Societies", demonstrates how at that time the distribution of Bibles, for example in Russia, Austria, Hungary and Roman Catholic Belgium, was interpreted as missionary activity. Distribution of the Scriptures by Bible Societies was the means to provoke awakening of spiritually dead regions of "Christian" Western Europe and beyond. The *Missionary Magazine* enjoyed great popularity. In a letter, Ignaz Lindl asks to forward him the fourth issue (1819) of the magazine to St. Petersburg: "The earlier issues I possess. I can't do without this material."<sup>52</sup>

### Groups, associations, societies: subsidising missions

Soon the young Basle Mission Institute was subsidised locally and nationwide by different groups: women's groups, associations of young men and other Christian societies. The Basle Association of Young Men, the predecessor of the local Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), is an example of mission-centred evangelical work among young adults influenced by the Basle Mission Institute. The previous group of young men, attended for example by the later missionary Leonhard Butscher, seems to have died around 1810. In 1825, the Basle Association was set up anew under the influence of the Basle Mission student Carl Wilhelm Isenberg; it was reorganised in 1828 by Christoph Heinrich Bonwetsch, father of the professor of theology Nathanael Bonwetsch. In 1825, the objectives were "To meet every four weeks, to edify ourselves through prayer, singing and reading missionary news, and to contribute something to mission."<sup>53</sup> They subscribed to missionary jour-

nals and corresponded with eleven associations in Germany and Switzerland. In 1832 they started a handwritten correspondence letter with news from 1830 and later, to be circulated and read in the associations.<sup>54</sup> To prevent spiritual tiredness, in 1828 Bonwetsch suggested meeting every fortnight. In the regulations he drew up, he stressed not only support for missions but also self-observation followed by sharing among the brethren. The missionary thrust of the Association continued so that after 50 years Jakob Ludwig Jaeger could report that a tenth of the members had entered the "direct service of the Kingdom of God": 38 foreign missionaries, 50 workers in national evangelism and Christian social welfare work, and 20 teachers.<sup>55</sup> Donations were forwarded to mission societies on a regular basis.<sup>56</sup>

In quick succession, a number of subsidiary associations for the Basle Mission Institute commenced. In this way, the funding of the new missionary society had a solid basis. The first subsidiaries were formed in Leonberg and Stuttgart in November and December 1816, at the same time one in Krefeld, another one in 1817 in Frankfurt am Main. In 1818, local groups began in Barmen, Basle and Bern. The year 1819 brought significant progress with new groups in Tübingen, Lauffen, Besigheim, Erlangen, Dresden, Leipzig, Bremen, Zürich and Schaffhausen, early in 1820 St. Gallen, and so on. Together they guaranteed the complete cost of training 28 students. Back in 1815, Steinkopf had suggested a weekly "Half Penny Offering" to strengthen continuous subsidising of missionary work, which was only realised much later.<sup>57</sup> This wave of helpfulness would not have been so huge without the previous twenty years in which the Basle Christian Society had promoted missionary interest through its publications.

### Nourishing young mission societies

It is fascinating to see how some of these subsidiary associations of the Basle Mission Institute developed quite rapidly into independent new missionary societies. The German missionary movement of the nineteenth century is an offspring of the Basle Christian Society and its affiliate societies. The Barmen Subsidiary Association planned a preparatory school for the Basle Mission in 1825. The plan could not be realised, but in 1828, the Rhenanian Missionary Society Barmen was formed by merging several local subsidiary organizations.<sup>58</sup> In 1824 the "Berlin Society for Promoting Evangelical Mission among the Heathen" was



founded<sup>59</sup> which started a mission seminary in 1828. The Saxony subsidiary societies in Dresden and Leipzig called to mind their confessional heritage and established the Lutheran Leipzig Mission in 1836.<sup>60</sup> One can observe the same trend abroad. The friends of the Basle Christian Society and Mission Institute in Paris founded the Mission Society Paris after 1822, whose first students came from French speaking Switzerland.<sup>61</sup> The existence of strong subsidiary associations was one reason why local Christian societies vanished one after the other. The circular from the Basle Committee in 1831 states that in part members have died, "... in part they have departed by joining missionary and other charitable institutions". In 1839, the particular societies outside Basle had ceased to exist.<sup>62</sup>

### University-trained, ordained clergy or skilled workers?

The Missionary Society Halle-Denmark had sent ordained theologians with a completed university education to Tranquebar; Herrnhut on the other hand sent skilled workers without higher education into missionary work. Jaenicke was the first who tried to meet the specific requirements of the job profile "missionary" with adequate training. The Basle Mission Institute tried to improve on what he did, not least because the first feedback was bad: The Church Missionary Society criticised the poor level of education of the Basle missionaries who entered into English service.<sup>63</sup> Yet the academic improvement of education at the Basle Mission School did not please its principal co-founder, C. F. Spittler who several times tried to realise his ideal of a "Pilgrims' Mission". After a short period of biblical training, skilled workers should work abroad in their own professions, pilgrims like Jesus himself, without luggage, spreading the gospel by distributing tracts, brochures and Bibles and gathering Christians in Bible classes. The first Pilgrim Missionaries came from the background of the Basle Association of young men and were sent out from 1829 onwards.<sup>64</sup> This type of "working missionary" or "tent making missionary" reflected the Herrnhut missionaries and was institutionalised in 1840 in the Pilgrims' Mission St. Chrischona. That is the reason why within 25 years two missions were established in the Basle area.

### The "inner mission" movement

In this context we may not forget the institutions of the so-called "inner mission" (home mission), which at that time were seen as missionary work

just as much as the mission among non-Christians. The Pilgrims' Mission St. Chrischona shows how unclear the delineation was between foreign and inner mission, especially in the traditionally Christian regions of Middle and Eastern Europe and in Ethiopia. The opening of a Christian teachers' seminary and orphanage in Beuggen near Basle in 1820 resulted from a long-standing awareness of suffering at home which was similar to the situation of non-Christians abroad. There can be no trans-cultural mission without Christian social service at home.<sup>65</sup> The specialist in Southern German Pietism, Gustav Adolf Benrath, uses the example of Baden province to demonstrate how troubled Christians in the subsidiary societies of the Basle Mission took responsibility for the inner mission and *subsequently* became the bearers of the Revival Movement in the nineteenth century; usually church historians describe this process the other way round.<sup>66</sup> Groups of "renewed" Christians formed the new pietistic fellowships of the nineteenth century, most of which exist to this day.

### 4. Seventeenth and early eighteenth century Pietism, the German Christian Society and mission

We have shown that there was no strong thematic link between the older Pietism (*Altpietismus*) of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and the German Christian Society. Unlike nineteenth century Pietism, in older Pietism mission was not a core issue. Nevertheless, there is a demonstrable personal continuity<sup>67</sup> in the persons of the Basle pastors Hieronymus Annoni (1697-1770, pastor in Muttentz) and his younger friends and colleagues Friedrich Meyenrock (1733-1799, pastor at St. Alban's Church) and Johann Rudolf Burckhardt (1738-1820, pastor at downtown Peter's Church). On the one hand Meyenrock and Burckhardt are firmly rooted in the pietistic life of eighteenth century Basle, on the other hand they cooperated with the Basle professor of theology Johann Wernhard Herzog (1726-1815) as co-founders and oldest committee members of the German Christian Society until their death; they also supported its trans-cultural missionary work. These founding fathers of the Basle Society guarantee the continuity of pietistic life in Basle up to the early days of nineteenth century awakening.<sup>68</sup>

Another link between eighteenth and nineteenth century Pietism is the local Brethren Church. In 1740, the Basle congregation counted 400 mem-



bers, in 1782 there were 600 in the town itself and the surrounding villages. In the 1820s, statistics show almost 1000 members.<sup>69</sup> When some devotional classes were opened to Christians who were not members of the Brethren Church in 1815, C.F. Spittler, mission director C.G. Blumhardt and some students of the Mission School took part in them.<sup>70</sup>

### Strongly rooted in pietistic heritage

Publications of the Basle Christian Society give evidence for the strength of the older pietistic tradition in which the Society stood. Benrath asserts that "The orientation of the German Christian Society in its spiritual intention was retrospective; it lived from relying on the older pietistic heritage." He finds evidence for his claim in the library of Annoni, which after his death became a public lending library of the Basle Society.<sup>71</sup> Lutheran theologians, especially those from Württemberg, are quoted just as well as Reformed ones. An anonymous brochure from a friend of the Society in Basle, *Encouragement to continue in protestant doctrine (Aufmunterung zur Beständigkeit im protestantischen Lehrglauben*, Basel 1783) recommends reading Luther and Spener to strengthen personal "doctrinal faith".<sup>72</sup>

Opponents of the German Christian Society who are influenced by the Enlightenment accuse the Society of "Herrenhuterianism and devotionalism" after reading her first publications: "The whole thing is Pietism mixed up with spiritual decoration from Herrnhut; Pietism – but not the gentle version of Spener and Francke."<sup>73</sup> The language and contents of the early issues of the *Collections* are evaluated critically: Its opponents argue that the "torrent of older pietistic vocabulary" and "lots of empty sanctimonious nonsense" as well as belief in miraculous and sudden conversions are not the best means to spread the Christian faith; thus these opponents confirm its theological roots in older Pietism.<sup>74</sup>

The 1787 issue of the *Collections* published an essay about "two main errors which destroy the true doctrine of justification, according to Spener". The essay has in mind the errors of justification by works and false assurance in faith.<sup>75</sup> Some members of the Society read Johann Arndt's *True Christianity* at evening devotion.<sup>76</sup> Johann Jakob Rambach is quoted, the *Schatzkästlein* of Hiller is presented as farewell gift.<sup>77</sup> Sermons, letters and events in the lives of M. Luther, J.A. Bengel, I.G. Brastberger, H. Annoni, Samuel Luzius, J.F. Meyenrock, G.

Arnold, E.G. Woltersdorf and G. Tersteegen are quoted in publications, are read or reprinted – to quote just some examples of how members of the German Christian Society absorbed the older pietistic theology and practice.<sup>78</sup> Reprints of classical devotional literature by J. Arndt, J.F. Starck, J. Meyer and others prove the continuity of pietistic godliness in changing times.<sup>79</sup>

## 5. Results

At the end of the eighteenth century, the members of the German Christian Society in Basle and the members of its affiliate societies were not the only persons to welcome the ideas of the beginning British missionary movement on the European continent. However, the majority of supporters of mission can certainly be found in the surroundings of the Christian Societies and they were encouraged to pursue missionary support. The foundation of German missionary societies in the first half of the nineteenth century clearly demonstrates the key position of the Basle Mission Society in this process and the local Christian societies supporting it. The members of the Christian societies form a link between the older Pietism and nineteenth century Pietism. The promotion of mission becomes a new main area of work for the Societies.

## Notes

- 1 W. Schlatter, *Geschichte der Basler Mission 1815-1915, vol. 1: Die Heimatgeschichte der Basler Mission* (Basel: Verlag der Missionsbuchhandlung, 1916) 12, mentions "the weak, almost perishing" Halle mission activities.
- 2 Herrnhut statistics include 1628 names of missionaries between 1732 and 1852, 948 men and 680 women (Dr. Rüdiger Kröger, Brethren Archives Herrnhut, letter from August 20, 2007).
- 3 H. Steinberg, *Hundert Jahre im Ringgässlein 1811-1911: Zwanglose Bilder aus der Geschichte und dem Leben der Brüder-Sozietät in Basel* (Basel: Verlag der Brüder-Sozietät, 1911) 19-20.
- 4 Steinberg, *Hundert Jahre*, 70.
- 5 *Realenzyklopädie*, 3rd ed., 13, 139; *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd ed., 3, 7; *ibidem*, 3rd ed., 3, 513.
- 6 Schlatter, *Geschichte* 1, 346; P. Eppler, *Geschichte der Basler Mission 1815-1899* (Basel: Verlag der Missionsbuchhandlung, 1900) 235.
- 7 H. Gantner-Schlee, *Hieronymus Annoni 1697-1770: Ein Wegbereiter des Basler Pietismus* (Liestal: Verlag des Kantons Basel-Land, 2001) 125-128; C. Rymatzki, *Hallischer Pietismus und Judenmission:*



- Johann Heinrich Callenbergs *Institutum Judaicum und dessen Freundeskreis* (1728-1736) (Tübingen: Verlag der Franckeschen Stiftungen Halle im Niemeyer-Verlag, 2004); K. Blaser, "Mission und Erweckung" in *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 7 (1982) 128-146, see 129.
- 8 Gantner-Schlee, *Hieronymus Annoni*, 127; H. Annoni, *Dem rechten Glauben auf der Spur: Eine Bildungsreise... 1736* (Zürich: TVZ, 2006).
  - 9 Gantner-Schlee, *Hieronymus Annoni*, 232 and 127 fn. 250.
  - 10 Gantner-Schlee, *Hieronymus Annoni*, 207.
  - 11 S. Spittler, *Christ. Friedr. Spittler im Rahmen seiner Zeit* (Basel: Spittler-Verlag, 1876) 374-375.
  - 12 E. Stachelin (ed.), *Die Christentumsgesellschaft in der Zeit der Aufklärung und der beginnenden Erweckung (= Christentumsgesellschaft 1*, Basel: Reinhardt, 1970) 98.
  - 13 Stachelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft 1*, 98.
  - 14 Urlsperger wants to build relationships with churches, see Stachelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft 1*, 100.
  - 15 Stachelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft 1*, 101.
  - 16 Stachelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft 1*, 161, doc. no. 68.
  - 17 Urlsperger in Stachelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft 1*, 161, doc. no. 68.
  - 18 See for example Wilhelm Jacob Eisenlohr from Stuttgart, quoted in Stachelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft 1*, 288, doc. no. 211 and 323, doc. no. 256, who regrets lack of qualified conservative theologians.
  - 19 See the Circular dated October 5, 1785, in Stachelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft 1*, 270-272, doc. no. 193.
  - 20 On his life and work W. Eisenblätter, *Carl Friedrich Adolph Steinkopf* (1773-1859): *Vom englischen Einfluss auf kontinentales Christentum zur Zeit der Erweckungsbewegung* (Unpublished dissertation Zürich 1967).
  - 21 Eisenblätter, *Steinkopf*, 82-88.
  - 22 They are entitled *Auszüge aus dem Briefwechsel der Deutschen Gesellschaft thätiger Beförderer reiner Lehre und wahrer Gottseligkeit*.
  - 23 *Auszüge aus dem Briefwechsel der Deutschen Gesellschaft thätiger Beförderer reiner Lehre und wahrer Gottseligkeit* 1783, 23-26; 1784, 210-218 and 362; 1785, 213 and 220-223.
  - 24 *Sammlungen für Liebhaber christlicher Wahrheit und Gottseligkeit* 1786, 318-320; 1787, 345-347; 1794, 288-295; 1795, 357-363; 1796, 307.
  - 25 *Sammlungen für Liebhaber* 1792, 52; 1793, 51-60; 1794, 225-239; 1795, 225-240; 1797, 220, 289.
  - 26 *Sammlungen für Liebhaber* 1800, 195.
  - 27 Nevertheless, Steinkopf is relevant for relations between England and the continent. During his 50 years' of service, he was the most important link between German circles interested in missions and British Missionary Societies; see Eisenblätter, *Steinkopf*, § 10 "The pastor's home and his guests" and § 11 "Steinkopf and Christian societies in London", 117-162.
  - 28 Schlatter, *Geschichte* 1, 12 and more extensive A. Ostertag, *Entstehungsgeschichte der evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft zu Basel* (Basel: Verlag des Missionshauses, 1865) 113-116.
  - 29 E. Stachelin (ed.), *Die Christentumsgesellschaft in der Zeit von der Erweckung bis zur Gegenwart (= Christentumsgesellschaft 2*; Basel: Reinhardt, 1974) 213, doc. no. 43; Ostertag, *Entstehungsgeschichte*, 117 and 120.
  - 30 Stachelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft 1*, 438, doc. no. 416 (Jung-Stilling) and in the Archives of the German Society (Archiv der Christentumsgesellschaft, Universitätsbibliothek Basel, Handschriftenabteilung) = ACG D IV 6, Nr. 1 (Wiertz, appendix: Schirnding).
  - 31 ACG D IV 6, Nr. 1b (= Appendix by Schirnding). Hans Walter Huppenbauer published the text of the Missionary Instruction for the first time in *ZMiss* 33 (2007) 148-164, entitled "A Theology of Missions dating from 1799?"
  - 32 Stachelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft 1*, 448-449, doc. no. 433, Jaenicke to Basle Mission Committee, Berlin, 16.2.1801.
  - 33 Stachelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft 1*, 496, doc. no. 503; Stachelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft 2*, 263, doc. no. 83 and 329, doc. no. 167; 332, doc. no. 171. The "Berlin Mission" of Johannes Gossner followed Jaenicke's Berlin Institute after a short interim of Jaenicke's son-in-law Rückert; see J. Althausen, *Kirchliche Gesellschaften in Berlin 1810-1830* (Unpublished dissertation Halle 1965) 26-30.
  - 34 Ostertag, *Entstehungsgeschichte*, 118.
  - 35 See M. Jakubowski-Tiessen, "Uns selbst untereinander zu ermahnen...: Die Christentumsgesellschaft in Ostfriesland", in *JGNKG* 82 (1984) 195-227, especially 223f. On another missionary candidate from Bavaria see F.W. Kantzenbach, "Ein verhinderter Missionar aus Bayern: Johann Friedrich Wiesinger im Jänicke-Institut in Berlin, in England und auf Malta", in *ZBKG* 40 (1971) 201-205. On relations with the *Church Missionary Society* (CMS) see L. Rott, *Die englischen Beziehungen der Erweckungsbewegung und die Anfänge des wesleyanischen Methodismus in Deutschland* (Beiträge zur Geschichte des Methodismus Beiheft 1, Frankfurt 1968) 29-31, 40-41 and W.A. Detzler, *British and American Contributions to the "Erweckung" in Germany, 1815-1848* (Unpublished dissertation Manchester 1974) 323-327.
  - 36 Staatsarchiv des Kantons Basel Stadt, Spittler-Archiv (= StABS PA 653, V) Supper, Berlin, letter without date [November 17, 1807] 2.
  - 37 ACG D V, 21 (1801) no. 149, Jaenicke to Schäuflin, 2.
  - 38 StABS PA 653, V, Supper; see P.N. Hol-



- trop, *Tussen Piëtisme en Réveil: Het "Deutsche Christentumsgesellschaft" in Nederland, 1784-1833* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1975) 171, 175, 181-183.
- 39 StABS PA 653, V, Butscher, Lebenslauf: Berlin, Aug. 12, 1803, "greeting the elder brethren" Berlin, June 27, 1805. The prayer request "conquering sin" hints at the problem of masturbation.
  - 40 Staehelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft* 1, 24; 474-475, doc. no. 472; 501, doc. no. 513. More letters and diaries can be found in the CMS Archives: CMS/B/OMS/C A1 E6/62 (day of death), see CMS/B/OMS/C A1 C E1, especially CMS/B/OMS/C A1 C E1/18 [24]. Johnson: CMS/B/OMS/C A1 E7A/37 from April 5, 1819.
  - 41 *Sammlungen für Liebhaber* 1798, 247-253, Rotterdam, January 7, 1798.
  - 42 Referring to Basle in 1804 see Staehelin *Christentumsgesellschaft* 1, 494, doc. no. 499; for 1812 see Staehelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft* 2, 233, doc. no. 68 and 238, doc. no. 73.
  - 43 Wilhelm Jacob Eisenlohr in Staehelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft* 1, 323, doc. no. 256.
  - 44 Staehelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft* 1, 420, doc. no. 399.
  - 45 Staehelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft* 2, 204, doc. no. 30.
  - 46 Staehelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft* 1, 459, doc. no. 447; Staehelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft* 2, 235, doc. no. 71.
  - 47 Staehelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft* 1, 196, doc. no. 110, fn. 365. The Tübingen correspondents of the Basle Society, members of the Württemberg Church governing board and professors of the protestant Lutheran Theological Faculty, are Magnus Friedrich Roos, Gottlob Christian Storr, Johann Friedrich Märklin, Joseph Friedrich Schelling and Ernst Bengel.
  - 48 Sources make mention of freedom of speech in Swiss Basle, but distrust of new established associations was also normal in German States: "The freedom ruling London and Basle can't be found in every place": Staehelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft* 1, 174, doc. no. 77, letter from the Tübingen correspondents mentioned above, dated January 3, 1782.
  - 49 The founding fathers of the Basle Training Institute promise "theological training equal to the Berlin Institute or even better than the classes provided by the busy Jaenicke", see Ostertag, *Entstehungsgeschichte*, 120.
  - 50 The older title until 1856: *Magazin für die neueste Geschichte der evangelischen* [1. and 2. vol. 1816-1817: *protestantischen*] *Missions- und Bibelgesellschaften*, ab 1857 *Evangelisches Missions-Magazin*.
  - 51 Staehelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft* 2, 325, doc. no. 161.
  - 52 Staehelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft* 2, 372, doc. no. 212.
  - 53 The oldest archival sources in Basle see YMCA Basle Archive, *Correspondenzblatt* no. 1, June 1st (1832) 6.
  - 54 Within the first nine years, twelve groups exchanged information. The names of ten locations have been published: Ober-Hallau, Schaffhausen, Bern, Mühlhausen, Tuttlingen, Calw, Frankfurt am Main, Barmen, Elberfeld and Berlin.
  - 55 J.L. Jaeger, *Bruchstücke von der Jubiläums-Feier* (Basel: Spittler, 1875) 25.
  - 56 See YMCA Archive Basle, *Correspondenzblatt* no. 1, June 1 (1832) 12; *Correspondenzblatt* no. 2, September 1 (1832), 20. Between 1825 and 1832, roughly 250 Swiss Franken were collected.
  - 57 Neither C.E. Spittler nor J.L. Krapf, but Steinkopf invented the "Halbatzenkollekte", see Schlatter, *Geschichte* 1, 26, 223-224 (1855); J. Eber, *Johann Ludwig Krapf: Ein schwäbischer Pionier in Ostafrika* (Riehen/Basel: ArteMedia / Lahr: Johannis, 2007) 198-191.
  - 58 Schlatter, *Geschichte* 1, 51-52, see also Rott, *Die englischen Beziehungen*, 38-41, Detzler, *Contributions*, 345-350.
  - 59 Schlatter, *Geschichte* 1, 54-55.
  - 60 Schlatter, *Geschichte* 1, 55-57.
  - 61 Schlatter, *Geschichte* 1, 57-58.
  - 62 Staehelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft* 2, 465, doc. no. 333; see also 19, doc. no. 66.
  - 63 Schlatter, *Geschichte* 1, 73. After first experiences with Basle missionaries in Sierra Leone in 1824, Steinkopf communicated to Basle harsh British criticism: Basle has to stop sending those missionaries to Africa!
  - 64 Johannes Mühlhäuser, Christian Ankele, Jakob Friedrich Haller, Jakob Weitbrecht and Jakob Vogel, see J. Eber, "Spittlers Versuche, im Raum Basel eine Pilgermission zu gründen" in T.K. Kuhn & M. Sallmann (eds.), *Das "fromme Basel": Religion in einer Stadt des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Basel: Schwabe, 2002) 37-50; Staehelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft* 2, 477, doc. no. 343; sources in archives: see Spittler-Archiv, StABS, PA 653; on Ankele in the YMCA Archive Basle, *Correspondenzblatt* Nr. 7, Sept. 1 (1834) 133-142; Blaser calls these missionaries "skilled workers mission", in "Mission und Erweckungsbewegung" in *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 7 (1981) 134.
  - 65 Christian Heinrich Zeller remembers Spittler and him standing on the platform of Basle Münster church above the Rhine enjoying the recent dedication for foreign missions and grieving the lack of similar institutions in the poor regions of Germany. They wished to establish institutions similar to those abroad also at home for the education of teachers serving poor children and congregations. At this moment, the educational institute in Beuggen Castle near Rheinfelden was born; see Staehelin *Christentumsgesellschaft* 2, 377, doc. no. 219, letter from Zeller in Zofingen, November 27, 1819.



- 66 G.A. Benrath, "Die Verbreitung und Entfaltung der Erweckungsbewegung in Baden 1840-1860" in *Mission und Diakonie, Kultur und Politik: Vereinswesen und Gemeinschaften in der evangelischen Kirche in Baden im 19. Jahrhundert* (VVKGB 59; Karlsruhe: EPV, 2004) 1-71, esp. 66-68.
- 67 M. Brecht, "Pietismus und Erweckungsbewegung" in *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 30 (2004) 36, 40.
- 68 See for example the letter from 1810 to the London Missionary Society, which was signed by three leading Basle Christians, Herzog, Burkhardt and Spittler: Staehelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft* 2, 214, doc. no. 43 and 2, 240, doc. no. 74; 2, 265, doc. no. 87.
- 69 L. Enequist, *Kurzer Abriss der Geschichte der Brüder-Societät zu Basel zur 150-jährigen Jubelfeier am 19. Januar 1890* (Basel: Geering, 1890) 10, 21, 33.
- 70 Enequist, *Kurzer Abriss*, 32; Steinberg, *Hundert Jahre*, 23.
- 71 M. Brecht, "Vorwort" in *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 7 (1981) 5; G.A. Benrath, "Die Basler Christentumsgesellschaft in ihrem Gegensatz gegen Aufklärung und Neologie" in *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 7 (1981) 93.
- 72 *Aufmunterung zur Beständigkeit im protestantischen Lehrglauben: für gemeine Christen von Freunden reiner Lehre und wahrer Gottseligkeit um der Bedürfnis der Zeit willen zum Druck befördert* (Basel: Decker, 1783) 16 pp.
- 73 Staehelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft* 1, 293, doc. no. 217 and 1, 294, doc. no. 219.
- 74 Staehelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft* 1, 299, doc. no. 226.
- 75 *Sammlungen* (1787) 44-50.
- 76 Staehelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft* 1, 157, doc. no. 63 (from 1780).
- 77 Staehelin, *Christentumsgesellschaft* 1, 297, doc. no. 224 (1786) and 1, 414, doc. no. 389 (1798).
- 78 Luther, *Sammlungen* (1799) 41; Bengel, *Sammlungen* (1796) 50 (and more often); Brastberger, *Sammlungen* (1802) 110; Annoni, *Sammlungen* (1796) 33; Luzius, *Hoffnung Zions* (1756), *Sammlungen* (1799) 142; Meyenrock, *Sammlungen* (1799) 177; Arnold in Staehelin *Christentumsgesellschaft* 2, 196; Woltersdorf in Staehelin *Christentumsgesellschaft* 2, 212; Tersteegen, *Sammlungen* (1799) 277.
- 79 Benrath, "Die Basler Christentumsgesellschaft", 94.