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What was European about Christianity? Early Nineteenth-Century Missionaries' Perceptions

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world,
and preach the gospel to every creature.¹

The Christian faith, as evangelical missionaries perceived it in the early nineteenth century and as most people will interpret it today, was not a strictly ›European‹ faith. Christianity was not in and of itself a ›European‹ religion, shaped by Europe, confined to Europe, to be adhered to only by Europeans. That is why missionaries in the nineteenth century felt compelled to go into the world and preach the gospel and evangelize. In their view, Christianity was meant to be a universal religion, a, *the*, religion for the entire world, and they thought it should in fact be so. However, at the time when the big and influential Protestant missionary societies went out to conquer the world for their religion, Christianity had a distinctly European face. It is this face, and the missionaries' perception of it, that I would like to investigate in this chapter.

I will first seek the answer to the questions: Why was it a European and not a British, or German, or Dutch face? What role did ›European‹ play for the missionaries? In some respects, ›European‹ became more important for them than their own nation. This was reflected in their writing about Europe and in their teaching of Christianity. A second major aspect in the European-ness of Christianity is its European history. Its meaning for the missionary movement will be discussed in the second section of this chapter. Finally, the European contents of the missionaries' Christian teaching have to be determined. At which points were European conceptions and European values – consciously or unconsciously – transported along with Christian teaching? When did Christianity come in European clothing? Where did Christianity and ›European‹ coincide and how did they differ? (How) did the missionaries become aware of the difference?

¹ Mark 16:15.

In contemporary literature, ›Europe‹ is often defined as a space within discourse. Most authors deny that there is an entity one could call ›Europe‹. And indeed, there is not an objective definition of ›Europe‹. It is often defined in contrast to the Other, by juxtaposing it with the non-European (which somehow seems easier to define). Scholars of the ›normative approach‹, on the other hand, find a European essence and use this as a starting point for their analysis. In the present analysis, the missionaries' use of the word ›Europe‹ and its implied meanings are examined, but implicit references to ›European values‹ must be included, too, since the missionaries did not always distinguish between ›European‹ and ›Christian‹. There was no real discourse about ›Europe‹ among the missionaries because it was not their intention to develop a concept or a definition of ›Europe‹, but they used the term nevertheless and added importance and meaning to it. It is this meaning that I want to elaborate in this analysis. ›Europe‹ is set in inverted commas when the (implicit) concept is in the focus, it is set without inverted commas, when used in a rather naïve way.²

In this chapter, I will seek to shed light on one decade of missionary labour, the 1830s. I will focus on a German-speaking international missionary society, the Basel Mission, and on an English organisation, the Church Missionary Society. These are two societies that cooperated – in Europe more than on the mission field – but that had distinct British and Continental characteristics, respectively. At the same time, these were two of the biggest missionary societies of that time and they were both pretty influential, mostly in their countries of origin, but also beyond.³ The Church Missionary Soci-

2 The literature on Europe is vast. On Europe and religion see e.g. Ulrike von Hirschhausen and Kiran Klaus Patel, ›Europäisierung‹, Version: 1.0, *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 29 November 2010, URL: <http://docupedia.de/zg/Europäisierung>. Access date: 8 May 2012; Lutz Niethammer, ›A European Identity‹, in *Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other*, ed. Bo Stråth (Brüssel et al.: Peter Lang, 2000), 87–111; Hayden White, ›The Discourse of Europe and the Search for a European Identity‹, in *Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other*, ed. Bo Stråth (Brüssel et al.: Peter Lang, 2000), 67–86; Mary Anne Perkins, *Christendom and European Identity: The Legacy of Grand Narrative since 1789* (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 2004); Ute Frevert, *Eurovisionen. Ansichten guter Europäer im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2003); Hartmut Kaelble, *Europäer über Europa. Die Entstehung des europäischen Selbstverständnisses im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main et al.: Campus, 2001); Wolfgang Schmale, ›Europa: kulturelle Referenz – Zitatensystem – Wertesystem‹, *Europäische Geschichte Online* (EGO), 2010-12-03, URL: <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/schmalew-2010-de> URN: urn:nbn:de:0159-20100921657. Access date: 8 May 2012. Heinz Duchhardt, ›Was heisst und zu welchem Ende betreibt man – Europäische Geschichte?‹, in: *'Europäische Geschichte' als historiographisches Problem*, ed. id. and Andreas Kunz (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1997), 191–202, finds eight points that constitute ›Europe‹ as a coherent community of values and experiences and names the first point ›Christianity and its norms‹ (195).

3 The history of the societies has been recorded on the occasion of their 100th anniversaries: Wilhelm Schlatter, *Geschichte der Basler Mission 1815–1915. Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der ungedruckten Quellen*, 3 vols. (Basel: Verlag der Basler Missionsbuchhandlung, 1916);

ety (CMS) was founded in 1799, the Basel Mission in 1815. As the CMS did not have enough candidates of their own, they sent out Germans over the first decades of their existence and even had a cooperation contract with Basel, by which they agreed to take over several Basel-trained missionaries each year (the numbers varied). Thus, there were Basel-trained – and that means Basel-socialised – missionaries sent out by the CMS. The first four (German) missionaries were sent by the CMS to West Africa in 1804; in 1809 the New Zealand mission began; in 1811 the mission in Malta; in 1813 one in India. CMS missions spread across Africa, Australia and New Zealand, Asia, the Caribbean, and the Mediterranean. North, Middle, and South America were less in focus. Basel initiated its first mission to West Africa in 1827 and to India in 1834. However, Basel Mission men had already been out via the CMS and other societies for much longer. By the 1830s, the mission programme was well on its way, but not yet conclusively established. It functioned, the procedures were clear, and the first mistakes had been made and amended. The mission had, however, not yet settled for one sole mode of procedure.

At that time, the missionary societies began to intensify their publication programmes in Europe. The Basel *Evangelischer Heidenbote*, a monthly journal for Basel supporters of all social levels, was founded in 1828. The CMS counterpart, the *Church Missionary Record*, was published from 1830 onwards. Both journals published edited and shortened reports from the missionaries as well as general comments and, particularly in the case of the *Heidenbote*, essays about the state of the world or about the state of mission. In some instances, reports by Basel Mission men sent out by the CMS were published in both journals.

These journals constitute the main source for this chapter. In them we find the missionaries' opinions as well as the attitudes of the missionary societies and of the journals' editors. To be sure, the missionaries' reports and diaries were subject to editing before they were published. In the case of Basel, it has been demonstrated that this editing work did sometimes alter the style, syntax, and grammar of what the missionary had originally written to a considerable extent. The editor even sometimes inserted important key words which had not been there in the original. However, he did not change the content of what the missionaries had written: The keywords could usually be found in the missionary's letter, just not in this particular sentence or paragraph.⁴ We

Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society. Its Environment, Its Men and Its Work*, 4 vols. (London: Church Missionary Society, 1899–1916). The history of the cooperation – and also of its problems – is related in detail by Schlatter; Stock is much more reticent on this subject.

4 See e.g. Christian Leonhard Greiner, letter from 31/3/1835, C – 1.2 Gebietsakten Indien. Canara. 1834–1841, Archives, m21/BM, Basel, compared with *Evangelischer Heidenbote* 1835,

can therefore rely on the publication, if not for a verbatim reproduction of the missionaries' words, at least with regard to the content of what they said and the concepts that they relayed. The original manuscript sources have been consulted when a particular formulation is important for the evaluation of a missionary's statement. The journals are complemented by other mission publications and archival material.

Although the Basel Mission and the CMS cannot, of course, represent all missionary societies of the early nineteenth century, my research corroborates what I read in the sources of other societies of the same group: evangelical mission societies which were linked with or maintained cordial relations with societies from other countries with a similar perception of Christianity.⁵

The goal of these societies was to evangelise, not to develop and spread theories, particularly with regard to their European supporters, for whom *Heidenbote* and *Church Missionary Record* were published. Their perceptions of ›Europe‹ and of Christianity must, therefore, be inferred from individual remarks and references. The number of these was, however, high. In both journals of the 1830s, there are hardly ever ten pages without a reference to Europe; more often there are ten pages in which the term ›Europe‹ can be found on nearly every page. ›Europe‹ was, therefore, an important concept for the mission. It became even more important when the missionaries were confronted with the Other, when they got to know non-European peoples and cultures through personal contact.

90–94. The text has been edited but the main subjects and keywords are found, if not in the original of the published parts at least in the omitted sections of the letter. In general, we can summarize that the main editing modifications (apart from omissions of difficult subjects) were related to lack of hope and trust on the part of the missionaries. The relationship with the indigenous people could be depicted, as both better and worse than the missionaries had described it, in different ways. A thorough research on the publication strategy of the Basel Mission has not yet been undertaken. The case of the China Mission in the beginning of the 20th century was analysed by Willy Rüegg, *Die Chinesische Revolution in der Berichterstattung der Basler Mission* (Zürich: ADAG, 1988). Jon Miller, *Missionary Zeal and Institutional Control. Organizational Contradictions in the Basel Mission on the Gold Coast, 1828–1917* (Grand Rapids, Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), describes the institutional structure of the Basel Mission and, therewith, the organisation of its publications.

5 My main sources for this comparison have been the London Missionary Society in England and the Rhenisch Missionary Society in Germany. The Rhenisch Missionary Society published the Journal *Das Missionsblatt* (Barmer Missionsblatt) from 1826. For the historiography of the societies see Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society 1795–1895*, 2 vols. (London: Frowde, 1899); Gustav Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission: Aus 150 Jahren Missionsgeschichte* (Wuppertal: Verlag der Vereinigten Evangelische Mission, 1978).

Christian mission and the emergence of European consciousness

Why was Europe so important for the missionaries and their societies? The first answer to this question is quite simple: Because it was the region from which the missionaries came. This answer is not as trivial as it might seem: Many scholarly publications underline the impact of the concept and politics of the nation on the missionaries – and the meaning of the missionaries for the nation's politics and nationalism in general.⁶ The importance of Europe is less well researched and has been noted only lately. Yet, in the sources and during the period I have examined, Europe was as significant to the missionaries studied as Britain to the British and even more significant than Germany or Switzerland to the German/Swiss.⁷

Indeed, the missionaries usually did not explicitly differentiate between Europe and their home country and they did not problematize the difference, but all of them used the term ›Europe‹ even more often than referring to their countries of origin – often employing the term and the names of their countries of origin as if they were synonymous – and thus made the importance of Europe clear. That this importance was not only formal, but that it also alluded to perceived substantive aspects of European culture and worldview, shall be shown in this chapter.

The publications referred to Europe in very different contexts. One context was simply geographical: When missionaries came home to recover their health or for a once-in-a-decade furlough they often referred to their home as ›Europe‹, not as England or Germany/Switzerland. When they wrote home, they wrote to ›Europe‹, they left ›Europe‹ and looked back at ›Europe‹ from abroad.⁸ This is particularly true for those Basel men who had been sent out

6 See with an emphasis on the English case Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag. Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Apollon, 1990); Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700–1914* (Manchester et al.: Manchester Univ. Press, 2004). See for a description of German mission and nationalism: Thorsten Altena, *»Ein Häuflein Christen mitten in der Heidenwelt des dunklen Erdteils«. Zum Selbst- und Fremdverständnis protestantischer Missionare im kolonialen Afrika 1884–1918* (Münster: Waxmann, 2003).

7 For instance, in 1830, the *Heidenbote* mentioned Europe 30 times and Germany/Switzerland 13 times; the *Church Missionary Record* mentioned Europe 36 times and England or English 25 times – and some of these references only referred to English services or to teaching English. The meaning of Europe to missions changed over the course of the nineteenth century as ideas of the nation and nationalism became more and more important, but in the early decades of the century the missionary societies that are examined here referred to Europe more often than to their home countries.

8 See *Evangelischer Heidenbote* (1828): 8: »Erholungsreise nach Europa«; *ibid.*: 32: »Briefe nach Europa«; *ibid.* (1829): 55: »das später seine Rückkehr nach Europa nöthig machte«, *Church Missionary Record* (1833): 83: »on his way to Europe«. Innumerable further quotations could be given.

by the CMS, but it can also be found in the writings of other missionaries. ›Europe‹ here is simply an abbreviation of ›England and Switzerland and Germany.‹⁹ It is easier to refer to Europe than to enumerate the different countries.

In addition, from the distance of Africa or Asia and in the face of the Other, the different European countries looked very much alike. Their similarities became more important than their differences. From the perspective of a European living among people who were entirely different from Europeans, English and Germans and Swiss all seemed similar.

This is true not only with reference to looking back to Europe, but also with reference to life in the foreign country. When the missionaries described the foreign, white population in India (or wherever else) they often subsumed them as ›Europeans.‹¹⁰ Only when differences between the Europeans were important for their reports or when none but, e.g., English lived in that town, were distinctions made.¹¹ But even in the latter case missionaries often used the term ›Europeans.‹¹² In this way, a consciousness of European homogeneity developed among the missionaries.¹³ In the mission areas, there were two kinds of people: Europeans and indigenous people, and it did not matter which country the Europeans came from – as long as they were Protestants. The European similarities were more important than the differences. This led to the first beginnings of a consciousness of Europeanness.

9 See e.g. *ibid.* (1831): 234 seq.: »for the benefit of his health; [...] a voyage to Europe became absolutely necessary [...] it was deemed advisable [...] that he should spend the winter in a more genial climate than that of England. He has therefore proceeded to the Continent, with the view of taking up his residence, for the present, at Bäsle«. *Heidenbote* (1830): 51: »auf seinem Rückwege von London nach Malta uns einen Besuch zu machen«. All translations in this article are Judith Becker's.

10 See e.g. *Church Missionary Record* (1830): 42: »the European Congregation bore witness to it«; *ibid.*: 217: »The European Christians residing here amount at present to 31«; *Heidenbote* (1832): 62: »Ihr Tauschhandel mit Europäern und Amerikanern besteht größtentheils in Gold, Elfenbein, Farbenholz, Gummi und besonders Sklaven; wofür sie hauptsächlich Schießpulver, Schießgewehre, Tabak und geistige Getränke erhalten«.

11 See e.g. *Church Missionary Record* (1833): 52: »he preached farewell Sermons to the English, Portuguese, and Tamul Congregations, and administered the Lord's Supper to about 36 of the English and Portuguese, and 25 Tamulians«. *Heidenbote* (1830): 9: »Neben den Russen, Armeniern, Georgiern, Persern, Griechen, Tartaren, Kalmucken und Indiern wandeln auch Engländer, Franzosen, Italiener, Schweden und Hunderte von Deutschen, meist des Handels halben, auf ihren Straßen umher«.

12 See e.g. *Church Missionary Record* (1833): 26: »My European Congregation shows an increasing interest for our course; and wherever it is required, we receive their liberal support and assistance. It is on that account that I like to carry on my English Ministry, as it has a tendency to unite our English community in the bond of the love of Christ, and, by their countenance and support, to put additional strength and energy into our proceedings among the Heathen«.

13 See e.g. *Heidenbote* (1828): 9: »Etwas Aehnliches glaubt im Grunde jedes Volk von sich, nur sagen wir Europäer es nicht so plump heraus«.

Another factor in the emergence of a European consciousness was cooperation. This was true for the mission field, where missionaries from different nations worked closely with one another, sometimes (seldom) in one station, but often in immediate proximity. Missionaries from different European countries and different mission societies assisted and encouraged one another:

in order not to follow my own ideas I wrote to the two experienced mission brothers Rhenius [a German, but not from Basel, working for CMS, J.B.] & Campbell in Bangalore. Just at this time the sad things about which I will write later happened to brother Rhenius and he did not answer. In lieu of brother Campbell, who works for the LMS in Mysore the even older dear brother John Hands answered who has his station in Bellary in Mysore district, too, and in the same society.¹⁴

Rivalry appeared more often between missionaries of different religious convictions than between missionaries of different nations – although that happened, too, of course. Such national rivalries grew during the course of the nineteenth century – in Europe as abroad – as political concepts changed and the nation became more important at all levels of society. Nevertheless, the main goal of the missionaries remained the (Pietist) evangelisation of the indigenous population. National differences took a back seat. The missionary societies, too, when cooperating, had to and did overcome nationalist attitudes.¹⁵ Cooperation was thus one of the reasons for developing a European consciousness in Europe as well.

14 Samuel Hebich, letter from 24 July 1835, C – 1,2 Gebietsakten Indien. Mangalur 1835, Archives, m21/Basel Mission, Basel no. 3, 2v: »um in dieser Sache nicht in meinen [eig-]nen Gedanken zu laufen, schrieb ich dieserhalb an die erfahrenen 2. Mission[s Brü-]der Rhenius, & Campbell in Bangalore. Bruder Rhenius kam in der Zeit ge[rad] in seine Betrübniß, wie ich Ihnen unten schreiben werde, und antwortete nicht darauf. Anstatt aber Bruder Campbell, der in der London M[issionary] S[ociety] im Mysore-[lande] arbeitet, antwortete mir der noch ältere theure Bruder John Hands, der seine Station in Bellary auch im Mysore-lande hat u[nd] in derselben Gesellschaft« (emphasis in original). Rhenius had to leave the CMS at that time because of disputes about the establishment of Anglican structures in India. See Carl Theophil Ewald Rhenius, *A Review of a work entitled The Church; her daughters and handmaidens*, etc. (London, 1835); id., *Reply to the statement of the Madras Corresponding Committee of the Church Missionary Society respecting the Tinnevely Mission ... To which is appended a narrative of occurrences which led to his return and renewed settlement in Tinnevely, 1835* (Madras: Athenæum Press, 1836); George Pettitt and Carl Theophil Ewald Rhenius, *Narrative of affairs in the Tinnevely Mission, connected with the return of the Rev. C. Rhenius* (Madras: Church Mission Press, s.l.? 1836); Anon., *Memoirs of the Right Rev. Daniel Corrie, LL.D. First Bishop of Madras, compiled chiefly from his own letters and journals by his brothers* (London: Seeley, Burnside, and Seeley, 1847), esp. 581–595. On Rhenius see Werner Raupp, »Rhenius, Carl Gottlieb (Theophil) Ewald«, in *Biographisch-bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm Bautz, vol. 8 (Herzberg: Verlag Traugott Bautz, 1994), 142–145. There are more details about collaboration in this report by Hebich.

15 See the relation between the CMS and Basel and the problems they had due to misunderstand-

»Europe«, then, was used when the missionaries described a foreign landscape. It served as an object of comparison, to enable the readers to imagine Asian or African countryside.¹⁶ When describing the culture, behaviour,

ings which were often based on nationalist imputations. For instance, in 1827, the CMS mistrusted the Basel mission on account of their teaching. Missionaries who were educated in Basel seemed to teach an apocatastasis pantoon, and the CMS wanted Basel to apologise in a written statement and further on to examine all Basel candidates who came to England. Basel refused but offered to draft a confession of faith. The differences proved reconcilable when two delegates from London travelled to Basel. It seems that part of the problem was the German candidates not being able to discuss difficult theological problems in English. The more important matter, however, lurked in the background: a general mistrust of the English church with regard to German theology of the time: The delegates admitted that they had been distrustful »because of the general apostasy of the German Protestant Church which was well known in England«, Schlatter, *Geschichte der Basler Mission*, 77. This distrust swung the other way about ten years later when the Basel Mission suspected the CMS of Catholic tendencies due to the power of the Oxford Movement in England. Karl Ostertag, teacher at the Basel Mission Seminary, visited England for several weeks and reported home that the leaders of the CMS were still undoubtedly evangelical, see *ibid.*, 81.

The *Evangelischer Heidenbote* in particular reported many times on official and unofficial cooperations, see e.g. (1838): 58: »[...] verließen bald nach unserm letzten Jahresfeste unsere Missionsschule, um in London ihre Vorbereitungsstudien weiter fortzusetzen, und unter der Leitung der verehrten englisch-bischöflichen Missionsgesellschaft ihr Tagewerk in der Heidenwelt zu treiben. Ihnen folgten am 5. April d. J. fünf andere unserer geliebten Zöglinge dorthin nach, welche von unserer Missionskommittee die Weisung erhalten haben, ein paar Monate lang sich im fertigen Gebrauch der englischen Sprache in London zu üben, und sodann nach Gottes Wohlgefallen, im Sommer dieses Jahres die nächste Schiffsgelegenheit zu benützen, um im Dienste unserer Missionsgesellschaft ihren Brüdern auf der canaresischen Küste des westlichen Indiens als Gehülfen zuzueilen«. *Heidenbote* (1835): 56 reported on the arrival of the first Basel missionaries in India, »wo sie von dem dortigen englischen Beamten, Herrn Nelson, mit wahrhaft christlicher Bruderliebe aufgenommen wurden. Mit seinen Empfehlungen zogen sie bald darauf die Küste hinauf bis nach *Mangalore*, um sich dort in der Nähe des brittischen Collectors, Herrn Anderson, auf einige Zeit niederzulassen«. There had been a meeting with a CMS delegation in Paris: »bewog unsere Committee, eine brüderliche Konferenz mit einigen geschäftsführenden Mitgliedern der verehrten englisch-bischöflichen Gesellschaft zu veranlassen, welche auch im Laufe des verflossenen Aprilmonates zu Paris statt fand. Die Hauptgegenstände wechselseitiger Berathung betrafen die Feststellung der innern und äußern Verhältnisse unserer deutschen Mission in Indien, und die sichersten Erleuchtungsmittel derselben; die spezielle Berathung unserer in Dienste dieser verehrten Gesellschaft arbeitenden Brüder, deren Zahl sich bereits auf fünf und dreißig beläuft; die möglichste Vereinfachung des gesammten Missionswesens beider Gesellschaften; die wechselseitige Mittheilung ihrer probehaltigen Erfahrungen im Missionsgeschäfte [...]. Ein reicher Segen Gottes ruhte auf diesen wechselseitigen, offenen christlich-brüderlichen Mittheilungen«. Another point was the support of German missionaries by English residents in foreign countries, see e.g. *Heidenbote* (1839): 64: »Einladung englischer Missionsfreunde, die sich zur Unterhaltung einiger deutscher Missionarien in Bengalen erboten«.

16 See e.g. *ibid.* (1828): 63: »Wenn Sie im Geist auf diese Gefilde blicken, so denken Sie sich keine Schweiz mit Bergen und Thälern, mit angebauten Aeckern, Gärten und Wiesen, sondern eine, nach und nach ins Innre sich erhebende, unüberschbare Fläche, die mit ungeheuern Bäumen und undurchdringlichem Gebüsch verwachsen ist«. The comparison of nature could also be used to explain biblical texts to European readers, see *Church Missionary Record* (1832): 78 about Isaiah 40,6.7: »The very affecting images of Scripture, which compare the short-lived existence of man to the decay of the vegetable creation, are scarcely understood in this country.

morality or intelligence of African or Asian people the missionaries could also refer to Europe and Europeans – in a positive and in a negative way. Sometimes the foreign people were described as inferior to Europeans, but sometimes they were characterised as superior in all respects. Europe could be the entity from which Africans and Asians should learn, but Europeans could also be the ones who needed to imitate non-Europeans in behaviour, Christian conviction or morality. Europeans could even be surpassed by non-Europeans in intelligence:

Formerly there had been much dispute as to whether or not the negro had the same faculties as white people. However, following the abolition of slavery, since so many praiseworthy efforts have been undertaken among the negroes, it has been shown sufficiently that the negro has the same faculties as the European. I have even experienced many children in my schools to be equal to the Europeans in all respects. Their intellectual ability is in some respects even quicker and superior than that of the others.¹⁷

All kinds of relations between Europeans and non-Europeans or between Europe and non-European countries were possible and were indeed engaged in by the missionaries and the societies that published their reports. The comparisons served different purposes: They were either meant to liken Europe with non-European peoples, countries, and cultures or they served the opposite goal: to highlight differences, either in order to urge Europeans to support missions or to motivate them to become even better and more zealous Christians – and not be surpassed by non-Europeans.¹⁸

The verdure is perpetual in England. It is difficult to discover a time when it can be said, *The grass withereth*. But let the traveller visit the beautiful Plain of Smyrna, or any other part of the East, in the month of May, and revisit it toward the end of June, and he will perceive the force and beauty of these allusions«.

17 See e.g. *Heidenbote* (1840): 89: »Es wurde früher viel gestritten, ob der Neger dieselbe Fähigkeit besitze, wie der Weiße. Allein seit der Abschaffung der Sclaverey, seitdem so viele lobenswürdige Versuche gemacht wurden unter den Negern, seitdem hat es sich auch hinlänglich bewiesen, daß der Neger dieselbe Fähigkeit besitze, wie der Europäer. Ja ich selber hatte die Erfahrung gemacht mit den vielen Kindern in meinen Schulen, daß sie in allen Dingen den Europäern gleich sind; ihr Fassungsvermögen ist in manchen Sachen schneller und größer, als das der Andern«. *Church Missionary Record* (1831): 264: »the Yatra, which is precisely the same as a Fair in England [...]. To the shame of those who call themselves Christians, this Fair far excelled any English Fair in good order and sobriety«; *ibid.* (1832): 236: »their speeches would do credit to Europeans«.

18 The context of the above quotation is a description of Africans which is not in reality trying to tell the European readers something about themselves – except that slavery was an abominable institution and that Europe had done the Africans much wrong. That they prove to be very intelligent increases the wrong. There are other examples, however, when the missionaries told a story about an indigenous person but, openly or covertly, actually told Europeans a story about themselves. Indigenous people could be used as an example of generosity to encourage the readers to higher donations. For example, this was the case with a widow who gave all her money to the mission, see *Barmer Missionsblatt* (1826): 84 where the reader is strongly remind-

I have only enumerated a few of the reference frames in which the term ›Europe‹ was most often used. They demonstrate why Europe was fundamental to the missionaries' publications and why Europe rather than their own nations became a point of reference to them. This had consequences for their perception of Christianity, too. They regarded Christianity as something European. And, therefore, it was not so much German-style Christianity that Basel missionaries from Württemberg wanted to convey, but European-style Christianity.

European history and Christianity

Still, Europe was not only important because of the cooperation taking place between missionaries and because of its use as a point of reference for comparisons. It was also important because the European missionaries shared a common history with regard to the peoples to whom they went. Indeed, Britain had much more of a colonial history than either Germany or Switzerland and the British missionaries felt this more strongly than their Basel colleagues. However, to all of them, European colonial history gave rise to a moral obligation. They all argued on the basis of this colonial history when they had to explain why and how they wanted to bring Christianity to Africans and Asians. They had a common European historical consciousness.

In Africa, it was the iniquities of slavery that had to be righted, outwardly by abolition, and inwardly by preaching the liberating message of the gospel – and culturally by educating the people. On the first page of its first volume, the *Church Missionary Record* said of its mission to West Africa:

This Mission was commenced in 1804. The spiritual darkness of the inhabitants of Africa, the wrongs which this country had inflicted on them by its participation in the inhuman Slave-Trade, the guilt contracted by that nefarious traffic, and the duty of attempting something towards a reparation of the injuries which we had heaped on them, were powerful and constraining reasons why the Society should direct its first efforts to this part of the world.¹⁹

ed of Matth. 12, 41–44. They could also be used as an example of really Christian behaviour. The *Barmer Missionsblatt* began its first volume in 1829 with a description of Christianity in Berbice (Guyana) and the hope: »Ich hoffe das, was wir da [...] sehen und hören, wird uns zur beschämenden und erweckenden Erbauung gereichen«, *Barmer Missionsblatt* (1829): 1.

19 *Church Missionary Record* (1830): 1. The *Heidenbote* brought this argument on page 2 of its first volume: »West-Afrika. Dort wohnen die schwarzen Neger, welche als Sklaven verkauft und in Schiffen fortgeführt werden. Wenn wir Christen diesen armen Heiden zu Hülfe kommen, so zahlen wir nur eine alte Schuld ab. Denn durch sogenannte Christen ist unter jene Völker das unbeschreibliche Elend gekommen, daß sie nicht nur ohne Gott, und in großer Furcht vor allerlei bösen Geistern ihr Leben verbringen, sondern daß sie auch nie sicher sind, und

Regardless of whether or not they came from a country where slaves were being or had been held on a large scale, and which had a powerful trading company, the missionaries referred to this deplorable history as a reason for their duty to evangelise.

In Asia, it was the wrongs of the trading companies that, while bringing trade and European customs, sometimes even European science, nevertheless had, as the missionaries saw it, neglected the souls, because they had not brought the most important part of what Europe had to share: Christianity.²⁰ Here, too, the saving message of the gospel had to be taught in order to let the people partake of Europe's most vital – because pertaining to life and death – advantage. Christianity was seen as the most important idea Europa had to convey because only true Christians would go to heaven and therefore live in eternal life and joy.

However, an even more important aspect of European history, as a motivating factor for the missionaries, was European religious history. Here, too, in spite of all national differences and accentuations, when facing the Other, the missionaries partook of a common European historical consciousness.²¹ From time to time, the missionary societies published short overviews of the history of Christianity, the history of mission, or European church history in their journals.²² European religious history from the first Christian missions to Europe up to the present was often quoted in order to underline the necessity of present missions. The missionary societies collected their arguments from the earliest time on.²³ What would have become of Europe had it not been evangelised? This evangelisation, which took place centuries ago, placed an obligation upon the missionaries in the nineteenth century. Europe should have begun the evangelisation of the world, it should have shared the gospel long ago. Now there were no more excuses. Europe had to evangelise the world.

The other proof derived from history was that the history of Christianity's victories had also always been a history of external crises.²⁴ The *Heidenbote* underlined that Western Europe and Northern Europe had been evangelised

immer fürchten müssen in Ketten fortgeschleppt, und mit einer Grausamkeit behandelt zu werden, welche zu groß wäre auch nur gegen Thiere«. *Heidenbote* (1828): 2.

20 The missionary societies strongly criticized the trade company's policy of not interfering with religion, a policy which factually led them to support indigenous religions and prohibit or at least disfavour Christian mission, see e.g. *Church Missionary Record* (1830): 34 et seq.; *ibid.* (1831): 93. On religious conversion policies in India see Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold. Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998).

21 An overview can be found in *Heidenbote* (1836): 1–4. The accentuation of the course of history and the interpretation of certain events could differ.

22 See e.g. *ibid.* (1829): 35 et seq.

23 See e.g. *ibid.* (1830): 40.

24 See *ibid.* (1833): 4 et seq.

in the fifth and tenth centuries, respectively, at a time of great wars and destruction in Europe. As the present was a time of turmoil again, this was interpreted as a proof that it was also a time for mission and evangelisation.

When looking at the whole of European church history, the missionary societies found that true Christianity won through in Europe in waves.²⁵ The Reformation, for instance, was one of the high points at which the Christian truth became manifest in Europe. With Protestant Orthodoxy and the rigid systematisation of theological concepts and, even more, with the lack of interest many Europeans showed for Christianity in the last decades of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, truth once again became blurred. However, the awakening movements in countries all over Europe and in North America brought truth to light again. Christians at present understood the Great Commission and had to obey it. The time for mission had come, argued the mission publications.

The historical argumentation for mission by the missionary societies was nearly always European. Arguments pertaining to only one country were rare. This applies to secular historical arguments as well as religious historical argumentations. Both based the motivation for mission on European history. In this respect, the meaning of Europe for Christianity was made explicit and conscious.

In addition, there was an implicit meaning, one of which even many missionaries were probably unconscious: The variant of Christianity that the missionaries conveyed in the nineteenth century was shaped by the history of Christianity in Europe. The missionaries saw and acknowledged the origins of Christianity in Africa and Asia and again and again emphasised that they hoped that those countries where Christianity's origins lay would become ›truly Christian‹ again.²⁶

They also were aware that Christianity for many centuries had mostly been a European religion. What they did not realise was that many European conceptions, even pre-Christian European conceptions, had shaped Christianity over the centuries. This is not only true for the outward face of Christ-

25 See the description of the history of Christianity in the first volume of the *Basel Magazin für die neueste Geschichte der protestantischen Missions- und Bibelgesellschaften* (1816). After a short introduction there follows a copy of: Hugh Pearson, *Kurzer historischer Umriß der Fortschritte des Evangeliums unter den verschiedenen Völkern sei der ersten Bekanntmachung desselben, bis zur Stiftung der neuesten protestantischen Missionen*, 1–152. Here, the connection between Christianity and civilisation is emphasised by means of the evangelisation of Europe: »Jedoch wurden nach und nach diese wilden Eroberer durch ihren Verkehr mit christlichen Völkern zivilisirt, und allmählig dahin gebracht, die Religion des Evangeliums anzunehmen« (ibid., 40).

26 See e.g. *Heidenbote* (1840): 55: »Wenn Gott fortfährt mit Seinem Segen die Arbeiten der Missionarien zu begleiten, so wird bald Afrika wieder werden, was es in den Tagen der Vorzeit war, da es die Kirche Europa's mit Lehrern und Bischöfen versah, und Tausende seiner Märtyrer in den Flammen starben, um mit ihrem Tode den Namen Jesu zu preisen«.

ianity, but also for its doctrine. But most of the missionaries were oblivious to the fact that Christianity had thus been shaped by its European context. To take only one example: the impact of Germanic notions of justice on the evolution of the Christian understanding of God's justice and Jesus' expiatory death has only been understood in the late twentieth century.²⁷ Many European influences on theological concepts could not be known to the missionaries because they had not yet been analysed. Furthermore, the missionaries were convinced that they taught the real truth and not a culturally shaped truth. They rejected most scientific efforts in the historical-critical scrutiny of the Christian religion.²⁸ They were obviously unaware of the specifically European shape of their brand of Christianity. Still, it is not only in spite of this, but even because of this, that their Christian teaching was intrinsically European. It is precisely because the missionaries did not acknowledge the specifically European shape of their particular brand of Christianity that they could not differentiate between European religious perceptions and Christianity as such, and conveyed both together. Only the contact with foreign cultures made them see the differences, but that was a slow process which would take several decades.

European piety and culture and the missionaries' perceptions of Christianity

Many of the ideas and concepts that the missionaries conveyed were European, albeit mostly implicitly and unconsciously. This pertained to the whole understanding of Christianity as mentioned above. It also pertained to the missionaries' piety and to the Christian culture that they taught. These are the focus of this section.

What the missionaries mostly wanted to convey (at least in the first decades of the nineteenth century) was not so much European culture as Christian values.²⁹ The missionaries usually did not explicitly differentiate

27 See *Anselm von Canterbury, Cur Deus homo? – Warum Gott Mensch geworden. Lateinisch und deutsch*, ed. Franc Salesius Schmitt (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960); Gisbert Greshake, »Erlösung und Freiheit. Zur Neuinterpretation der Erlösungslehre Anselms von Canterbury«, *Theologische Quartalschrift* 153 (1973): 323–345.

28 See as an example of a moderate adaptation of historical-critical exegesis Hermann Gundert, *Aus Dr. Hermann Gundert's Briefnachlaß. Als Manuskript gedruckt* (Stuttgart: Vereins-Druckerei, 1900), 295–306.

29 For a definition of values see Hans Joas, *Die Entstehung der Werte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999); id., *Braucht der Mensch Religion? Über Erfahrungen der Selbsttranszendenz* (Freiburg et al.: Herder, 2004), 44; Clyde Kluckhohn, »Values and Value-Orientations in the Theory of Action. An Exploration in Definition and Classification«, in *Toward a General Theory of Action*, ed. Talcott Parsons and Edward A. Shils (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 388–433; Karl-Heinz Hillmann, *Wertwandel. Ursachen, Tendenzen, Folgen*

between Christian and European values – or even Christian and European culture. This is one of the reasons why the terms ›Christian‹ and ›European‹ were extremely rarely used together in the missionaries' writings. Christian values appeared in the guise of European culture.

The fact that missionaries linked specific values and a particular behaviour to Christianity becomes evident if we analyse the conversion reports that they sent home. An inward conversion to Christianity had to be accompanied by a particular form of behaviour and usually by good knowledge about Christianity as well. Only when knowledge, persuasion and behaviour corroborated were the missionaries convinced and were they able to convince their readership that the person was really converted.³⁰ Only then could a person be baptised and received as a member in the Christian communion. Conversion always had to be spiritual as well as moral.³¹

Whoever wanted to become a Christian had to »walk consistently« or show a »consistent conduct«. Christians were meant to »adorn the doctrine of the Gospel by a consistent Christian conduct«. ³² The missionaries usually did not explain this further. They assumed that their readers knew what they meant. And indeed, »consistent walk« was a very popular evangelical expression in the nineteenth century. These expressions could be linked to the letter to Ephesians with its catalogues of vices and virtues, or to similar biblical references, as an explanation of what »consistent walk« and »Christian conduct«³³ meant.³⁴ Evangelicals, themselves familiar with the reference to »consistent walk« and »Christian conduct« in non-missionary contexts, were, therefore, aware of what the missionaries had in mind.

(Würzburg: Carolus Verlag, 2003). For values and Europe see Hans Joas and Klaus Wiegand, ed., *Die kulturellen Werte Europas* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 2010), Moritz Csáky and Johannes Feichtinger, ed., *Europa – geeint durch Werte? Die europäische Wertedebatte auf dem Prüfstand der Geschichte* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2007).

30 See e.g. *Church Missionary Record* (1831): 159: »[...] individuals have given proof, by holy and consistent conduct, that they have embraced the Truth of the Gospel, not in profession merely, but in heartfelt sincerity«. Ibid.: 229: »[...] they had improved in knowledge of the Gospel; and I trust that their conduct is at least outwardly regular«. Some missionaries considered knowledge indispensable, c.f. Issak Theoph. Schaffter: »Let us not, therefore, slacken our efforts to instruct the rising generation. Christian Knowledge is always the foundation of Christian Conversion«. (ibid.: 226).

31 This was underlined many times. In this way, the missions also defended themselves against accusations, see e.g. *Church Missionary Record* (1831): 252: »This must [...] be a convincing proof of their moral improvement. It also exhibits the egregious mistake of those who have often affirmed that the doctrines which we preach are not calculated to reform the inhabitants, and to inculcate principles of sound Morality and Religion: this change for the better has certainly been brought about by the doctrines we preach«.

32 Ibid.: 224.

33 Ibid. (1832): 49, 62.

34 See Charles Simeon, *Horae homileticae: Or Discourses (Principally in the Form of Skeletons) Now First Digested into One Continued Series and Forming a Commentary upon Every Book of the Old and New Testament*, vol. 17 (London: Holdsworth and Ball, 1833), 378.

Still, one could object that these values were not European, but – as the missionaries saw them – really and purely Christian values because they were derived from the Bible. Yet, two arguments speak against this assumption. Firstly, these values had become European values through the European Christian interpretation of them. They had even become independent of Christianity. Fornication or filthiness or insubordination, all mentioned in Ephesians 5, had become vices even to those who did not consider themselves devoted Christians. Their opposite, chastity, cleanliness, subordination were the derived virtues, recognised by Europeans of all persuasions. Uncleanliness, for instance, was a common accusation against all non-Europeans. The Europeans considered themselves leading a clean life, as opposed to most non-Europeans.³⁵ Cleanliness had become a European value. At the same time, it was considered a Christian value, too, on the one hand because it could be found in the Bible, on the other hand because it was considered part of a decent Christian way of life.

Secondly, there are so many values, so many different attitudes towards life and towards morals in the Bible, that there was no need to choose this particular pseudo-Pauline letter (and others) as a model. The missionaries could also have referred to other biblical books, had they wanted to convey different values. Ephesians and similar scriptures were chosen because they fitted in well with the missionaries' attitudes – indeed, with the attitudes of evangelicals in general. Of course, the use of domestic codes or ›Haustafeln‹ was nothing new in the tradition of Christian ethics and the emphases on these values were not unique to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, the ranking within the group of values could and did differ between different periods in the history of European Christianity, as did the particular definition of the values.³⁶

General references to the Christian way of life of newly converted indigenous people other than to ›consistent‹ or ›Christian‹ conduct were much rarer. Sometimes, the missionaries only stated that someone behaved ›with great propriety‹.³⁷ ›Good‹ or ›proper‹ conduct, too, were possible expressions.³⁸ In by far most of the cases, however, ›consistent‹ or ›Christian‹ formed part of the expression when a general evaluation was given. In every case conversion to Christianity changed people's behaviour: ›Their Scrip-

35 See e.g. Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 175.

36 In matters of the hierarchy of values see, with a particular reference to the work by Ronald Inglehart and Helmut Klages and on the topic of Europe, Helmut Thome, ›Wertewandel in Europa aus der Sicht der empirischen Sozialforschung‹, in *Die kulturellen Werte Europas*, ed. Hans Joas and Klaus Wiegandt (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 2010), 386–443.

37 *Church Missionary Record* (1832): 88.

38 *Ibid.*: 127, 132.

tural Knowledge gradually increases, and a corresponding change seems to take place in their opinions and feelings», wrote Charles Pinhorn Farrar from West India in 1832.³⁹

Additionally, the missionaries sometimes described the behaviour of the newly converted persons. This indicates further and more specifically than Ephesians and other biblical references what the missionaries expected of their converts, what a Christian way of life looked like in their view and which European values and cultural attitudes they wanted to convey. These values could be illustrated in positive descriptions of what people did after their conversion, but they could also be brought out in depictions of how heathen people acted and what Christians should certainly not do. Both methods can be found in the missionaries' writings, the positive more often than the negative one. Both could also be used with reference to Europeans, but usually the indigenous people were the focus of the missionaries' descriptions.

I will now first give short lists of the main values and vices as they were perceived by the missionaries, and then ask where Christian values and European culture had merged and how distinctions were made. The values that were most often mentioned are humility, patience, perseverance, earnestness, simplicity, zeal, diligence, love, serving, obedience. Joy and peace also belong to this enumeration. Then there were values which referred more to life in the world: proper behaviour, cleanliness, peaceableness and friendliness, and morality in general. Attendance to religious duties, observance of Sundays and regular attendance of church services were a matter of course. Reports of conversion usually emphasised both the internal and the external conversion, spiritual and secular life.

The negative list consisted of lying, stealing, cheating, laziness, alcoholism, quarrels and fights, fornication, and, of course, idolatry as the main vices. There were two contexts in which they appeared: in descriptions of not-yet converted indigenous people and in conversion reports.⁴⁰ Vices were mentioned in the characterisation of »uncivilized« indigenous peoples. The very use of the word »uncivilized« (as opposed to »barbarous«)⁴¹ shows that the missionaries were convinced that these attitudes and behaviours could and would eventually be overcome by proper preaching and teaching of Christianity. When the indigenous adhered to Christianity (real Christianity,

39 Ibid.: 281.

40 In contrast to Dipesh Chakrabarty's thesis on the use of »not yet« in Western thought the missions usually did expect non-Christian people to be able to convert completely and also found »real conversions« among the indigenous. The term is used without ideological emphasis. See Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J., Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000).

41 The distinction between »uncivilized« and »barbarous« as well as its use in nineteenth-century argumentation is analysed by Perkins, *Christendom and European Identity*, 238–254.

of course – not nominal Christianity) they would let go of their vices and embrace Christian values. These anti-values therefore always formed a kind of black screen on which to depict the real Christian values in an even better light. At the same time the conversion thus became even more spectacular and the vices were associated with the indigenous culture rather than the essence of indigenous people.

Furthermore, the vices were often mentioned as having been overcome. People had been liars before their conversion, now they always told the truth. They had been lazy, but now were always diligent in Christian learning and behaviour. Vices were what Christians left behind, the real converts adhered to Christian virtues. One woman is quoted as saying during her baptism ceremony: »Formerly [...] I used to tell falsehoods, to steal, and to transgress, without fear, all the Holy Commandments of God; but afterward I was very much troubled about this, and was afraid I should go to Hell. I prayed much to God, who heard my prayers, gave me *peace in believing* in the meritorious death and sufferings of my Saviour, and also strength to leave off sin and to serve Him.«⁴²

In converting to Christianity in faith and practice, the indigenous became similar to the Europeans. One missionary spoke of a »gradual approximation of habits and manners, among the Natives, to our own«.⁴³ Christianity made the converted indigenous person more European.

This was not only assumed by Europeans but also by indigenous Christians themselves.⁴⁴ In 1831 W. Williams was asked by his converted indigenous servant: »Will it be correct for the Baptized Natives to have a meeting to themselves on the night of your Prayer Meeting? Because [...] there is one of us who says it will be wrong, because it will be making ourselves like the Europeans.«⁴⁵ The problem of mimicry⁴⁶ lurks here in the background. The

42 *Church Missionary Record* (1832): 224 (emphasis in original).

43 *Ibid.*: 46.

44 And, of course, for many indigenous people, Christianity or Christian schools served as containers for attaining European skills. They did not intend to adopt the Christian faith along with European education and their relationship to Europeans. The missionaries, however, thought that their wish to learn European skills was so great that they would be content to learn things about Christianity, too, if that was the precondition for the schools. See e.g. *Heidenbote* (1830): 37.

45 *Church Missionary Record* (1832): 55 et seq. In this case, it is very probable that the story the missionary reported had taken place in this or a very similar way because there would be no reason to quote the indigenous youth unfaithfully – the report does not depict the missionary's work in a very positive way. The outcome had not been what he had intended. The general line of the story was to show that indigenous people began to have their own prayer meetings. There are other reports in the missionary journals which suggest in a much stronger way that the missionaries edited what they reported of what the indigenous said.

46 See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), 121–131.

missionary would not have been amused that the indigenous had got the idea that praying could make them European and that that would be objectionable. The missionaries certainly wanted the converted indigenous to behave as they did regarding piety. On the other hand, the indigenous youth had observed very well that the missionaries did not want them to become entirely European. This unsolved conflict accompanied all missionary efforts. The indigenous converts were expected to behave like good, sometimes even like model, Christians and thereby to fulfil European rules. They were, however, never expected to become Europeans.⁴⁷

However, when newly converted people were compared to or even used as a model for Europeans, this also affected Europe: On the one hand, Europeans will not have liked being compared to non-Europeans, either by being lumped together with them or by having non-Europeans even exhibited as models to them. On the other hand, Europe suddenly became something like an ›Other‹ to true Christianity. A small gap opened between the perception of true Christianity and its European shape. Indeed, this did not change the fact that the missionaries' perception of real Christian behaviour was shaped along European cultural lines. By virtue of the contrast with non-European non-Christian behaviour, positive – Christian – values became even more European, that is, their European appearance was emphasised; but the unconscious identification of Christian and European received its first fault lines.

The values and moral standards that began in the perception of the missionaries as purely Christian values turned into European – or at least consciously European – values through being contrasted with the Other. Christian European values were illustrated and made conscious by depictions of the abominations of other cultures. For instance, many missionaries depicted the heathen Indians as notorious liars. Converted Indians, however, turned vera-

47 The difference between Europeans and indigenous people in matters of Christianity was discussed in relation to mission strategies. There was no doubt in these missionary societies that eventually indigenous churches should be led by indigenous people because they were better fitted to that task than Europeans (see Stock on Henry Venn's labour for this development: Stock, *History of CMS*, vol. II, 411–426). The societies only saw them not yet fit to do it. (Here, Chakrabarty's observation is correct, see Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*). The theory of the hierarchy of civilisations had already been developed and, of course, the mission leaders and certainly some of the missionaries knew Hegel's *Philosophy of History* even if they usually refused it and all other non-evangelical scholarship. See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel Werke*, vol. 12 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970). Still, in their view, this theory was always surpassed by Christianity. A ›real Christian‹ indigenous was certainly to be rated higher than a ›nominal Christian‹ European – although he or she would never attain the position of a ›real Christian‹ European, at least not in their own generation.

cious. They thereby assimilated to Christian Europeans. Thus, truthfulness, a Christian value, was perceived as a European virtue in contradistinction to the Indian vice of dishonesty.⁴⁸

By ascribing non-Christian vices to indigenous peoples and by underlining the assimilation of converts to Europeans, the missionary movement turned values which had been assumedly simply Christian into European Christian values. By emphasising and repeating them in every issue of their journals, the societies helped to establish them as European Christian standards among their readers. However, the association of specific values and vices with Europeans/Non-Europeans or Christians/Non-Christians was not uniform. The situation was more complex. The missionaries themselves could be accused of certain vices, and virtues could be contested because of the mission.

The complexity of the attribution of virtues and values can be shown by an example: the dichotomy of luxury and simplicity, of pride and modesty. Simplicity and modesty were some of the core values of evangelical Christians in the early nineteenth century.⁴⁹ Again and again, they were underlined in the missionaries' reports. Luxury and pride, on the other hand, were always condemned. They were associated with ›heathen‹ behaviour, either of the indigenous people themselves or of ›so-called Christians‹ of Europe who were not really converted and did not behave as Christians, in the mission's view, were meant to do. However, if Europeans were negatively depicted in relation to luxury at all, they were usually depicted as seducers of the indigenous people; their own luxury was seldom referred to.⁵⁰

In contrast, simplicity and modesty were ascribed to truly converted people. However, this did not always work out well: In 1832, the *Church Missionary Record* published the conversion report of a young New Zealander and his request for baptism:

From Ngapuhi, a Boy living with Mr. Yate. Sir, Father, Mr. Yate – My ink is not good, my paper is dirty, and I am altogether ashamed. Do you remember, when you came to New Zealand, I was a little boy just like you were twenty years ago; and I was living in Mr. Clarke's house; but Mr. Clarke said, ›Go Ngapuhi and live with Mr. Yate;‹ and you said, ›Come Ngaphui, and live with me;‹ and I said, ›Aye;‹ and then Henry Kemp said so. You called me a dirty child, a dirty New-Zealand boy, and gave me a piece of soap, and lent me Flora's comb; and when I was clean washed in the Kerikeri, you gave me clothes, European clothes, which I put on and was proud. I was never proud before.

48 This is, of course, what the missionaries implied, not even what they said, and it certainly must not be read as a description of Indian (or European) reality.

49 Interestingly, their biblical foundation is rather weak.

50 After all, Europeans were not the key object of the mission reports. That is at least one of the main reasons that their vices were often only mentioned in passing.

And when I heard you say, in the House of Prayer, that it was very bad to be proud, and that God was angry with the proud every day, I sold my white-man's clothes for a Native mat, and dirted (!) my hands and my face, and made myself a not-proud New-Zealand boy again.⁵¹

This story demonstrates several aspects of the complex story of pride and modesty, European and indigenous behaviour. Ngaphui had done what the missionaries expected of him: He had assimilated his behaviour to European standards and European clothing formed part of these standards.⁵² Yet, this ›Europeanisation‹ was accompanied by the emergence of a non-Christian attitude: pride. This had certainly not been intended by the missionaries, as they always disapproved of pride. And indeed, Christianity was even seen as a stronghold against pride. Secular education, removed from Christianity, would contain the vice of pride.⁵³ Still, they could hardly approve of Ngaphui's solution – becoming a dirty New Zealander again – since cleanliness was one of the values they wanted to convey. What appeared simply essential for a decent life to the missionaries was luxury to the indigenous.

However, the missionaries associated luxury – and pride even more so – rather with non-converted indigenous people than with themselves, and they certainly did not associate it with Christian faith. In most of the cases where luxury or pride were discussed, they were illustrated with a story about Africans or Asians. In the case of Asia, luxury was not mentioned very often, presumably because the missionaries hardly ever worked among those social strata of indigenous people where they could have met with much luxury. Pride, however, could well be found in descriptions of Asians. When the missionaries met Brahmins, it played an important role. In 1840, the *Heidenbote* reported about a Hindu who was only restrained by »caste pride« and »the impure wish to become the head of a heathen-Christian sect of his own« (besides fear of his family and some other motives) from becoming Christian.⁵⁴ And of course, it was a man richly adorned with gold who interrupted the missionaries' preaching to Indians in 1830.⁵⁵ In addition, luxury was found in the descriptions of Hindu rituals and of their dealings with their

51 *Church Missionary Record* (1832): 88 et seq.

52 See e.g. *ibid.* (1831): 12: »the Natives assembling together for Divine Worship, clean, orderly, and decently dressed, most of them in European Clothing«.

53 See *ibid.* (1833): 26: »They perceive that secular knowledge does not civilize, as they supposed; but adds to the native blindness of the mind the most insufferable pride. Men become *puffeth up in their fleshly mind*. This is the general state, assuredly, of the Educated Natives in India«. (Emphasis in original).

54 *Heidenbote* (1840): 42.

55 See *Church Missionary Record* (1830): 131.

Gods. Thereby, luxury got a religious meaning, too. It was associated with the Hindu rites of adorning Gods made by men, something that the missionaries could always wonder about and look down on.

When the missionaries gave reports of African kings, they were usually interested in emphasising their support for the missionary efforts more than their faults. That foreign regents might have had European education more in mind than European religion when they supported the establishment of schools or sent their own children to missionary schools sometimes offended the missionaries, but more often they tried to see the good in it and hope for the evangelising effect of their teaching: »Some Moslems would, according to what we heard, like to send their children to a school in which they would be taught English, Geography, Arithmetic etc., even if the teachers were Christians.«⁵⁶ Even if the missionaries knew very well that the indigenous people sent their children to their schools for material and social reasons, they happily seized the opportunity to teach them Christian doctrine and European – Christian – behaviour.

In Africa, luxury was not a topic as such. Phenomena that were reported, and associated with African culture, were interest in worldly possessions, and the display of wealth. These were often associated with other kinds of behaviour which, in Europe, were regarded as examples of vice. In 1832, Georg Adam Kießling, who had been in West Africa since 1827, reported at the Basel Mission's annual meeting that the African understanding of wealth was demonstrated in polygamy: the richer a man was, the more wives he had. In the same speech Kießling said that some African fathers sold their children »perhaps only for one bottle of liquor.«⁵⁷ In 1830, his colleague Jakob Friedrich Sessing quoted Bassa-Chief Joseph: »I do not like to sell my people; I do know that they are children of the God up there like me. But I need tobacco,

56 *Heidenbote* (1830): 72: »Mehrere Muhamedaner würden, nachdem was wir gehört haben, ihre Kinder gerne in eine Schule schicken, in der sie im Englischen, in der Geographie, Arithmetick etc. unterrichtet würden, wenn auch schon die Lehrer Christen wären; vielleicht würde es auch ausführbar seyn, gleich von Anfang christliche Schulbücher einzuführen, und die Schüler mit dem Inhalt des Alten und Neuen Testaments bekannt zu machen«. See likewise e.g. *ibid.*: 37: »der Landes-Regent, *Abbas Mirza*, [...] selbst einige seiner Prinzen zur Schule schicken würde, wenn in derselben die Kenntnisse der civilisierten Europäerwelt gelehrt würden«. (emphasis in original). The surmises of the missionaries were sometimes extremely negative, see *ibid.*: 20: »Noch muß ich Ihnen melden, daß uns die Häuptlinge des Bassavolkes stets einladen, zu ihnen zu kommen, um ihrem Volke das Evangelium zu verkündigen. [...] Auch vom Kap Mount (nördlich der Kolonie am St. Paulsfluß) her, kommen der Einladungen viele; doch traue ich diesen noch nicht recht, weil ich fürchte, die dortigen Häuptlinge möchten den Zweck haben, ihre Leute durch Unterricht für den Sklavenhandel desto verkäuflicher zu machen«.

57 *Ibid.* (1832): 62: »vielleicht nur für ein geistiges Getränk«. – In the same speech, Kießling criticized Europeans very explicitly. On Kießling see Karl Rennstich, »Kießling, Georg Adam«, in *Biographisch-bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm Bautz, vol. 3 (Herzberg: Verlag Traugott Bautz, 1992), 1540–1542.

pipes, guns, powder, cloth etc., if I can get these things in a different manner, I will not sell my people anymore, because I like them.«⁵⁸ Sessing concluded that this interest in worldly possession could only be broken by the »power of the Gospel« and simultaneous »civilisation (education)«. In 1832, Missionary Haensel complained that West-Africans became »fond of fine clothes, conceited and stubborn«⁵⁹ instead of assimilating their behaviour to Christian standards. Christian converts should wear decent clothing as Europeans did, and as Ngapuhi had done, but they should not become proud or fond of it. The line between the right mimicry of Europeanness and condemnable exaggeration was very fine.

Thus, pride and worldly interest were associated with African and Asian non-Christian culture even if luxury itself remained more of a European vice. The missionaries themselves complicated things as they caused rumours about luxury and had to defend themselves against accusations from Europe that they lived in luxury and pomposity in Africa or Asia. These accusations could come from within evangelical circles, but were also widespread outside of them and constituted a popular accusation against non-popular evangelicals in Europe.

From time to time, the missionary journals published explanations by the missionaries as to why they needed things that would be considered luxury in Europe, but that were simply necessary for surviving in a tropical climate.⁶⁰ In 1840, Johann Jakob Weitbrecht⁶¹ wrote from India in response to a general accusation levelled against the missionaries⁶² in his region: »Furthermore, every honest visitor will willingly admit that the European is not able to carry out all those domestic duties which are easily done in the cool home country and that some things might be necessary here in Bengal which in Germany do belong in the category of luxury.«⁶³

58 *Heidenbote* (1830): 55: »Ich verkaufe meine Leute nicht gerne; ich weiß wohl, daß auch sie Kinder des Gottes da oben sind, wie ich selbst. Aber ich brauche Tabak, Pfeifen, Flinten, Pulver, Tuch u. s. w., wenn ich diese Gegenstände auf anderm Wege erhalten kann, so werde ich meine Leute nicht mehr verkaufen, denn sie sind mir lieb«. On Sessing see Karl Friedrich Ledderhose, »Sessing, Jakob Friedrich«, in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 34 (1892): 42–44 [Online version]; URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd138425566.html>. Access date: 11 May 2012.

59 *Church Missionary Record* (1832): 123.

60 On the other hand, there were obverse reports, too: John Knight wrote from Sri Lanka: The missionary »is obliged here – more perhaps than in any other part of the world – especially if unmarried, to attend to little affairs, which in England he would consider beneath his notice, and which consume much of his time that ought to be better employed«. *Ibid.*: 156.

61 He was sent out in 1828, see *Heidenbote* (1828): 97.

62 See Paul Jenkins, »The Church Missionary Society and the Basel Mission: An Early Experiment in Inter-European Cooperation«, in *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799–1999*, ed. Kevin Ward und Brian Stanley (Studies in the history of Christian missions) (Grand Rapids, Mich., Cambridge: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 43–65.

63 »Ueberdieß wird jeder redliche Beobachter gerne zugeben, daß der Europäer in diesem indi-

And indeed, many missionaries who tried to live like the indigenous died soon after their arrival in the foreign country, many even before they had time to adapt to the climate.⁶⁴ On the other hand, missionaries had to be »ready to suffer hunger in evil times, and, of course, to exchange some of the European conveniences for a greater abundance of the peace of God.«⁶⁵

The attribution of luxury and pride was not unambiguous; the definition of simplicity and modesty was even less so. For Europeans, »modest« European clothes were proper Christian clothing, but for the indigenous they could become a source of pride and haughtiness. Disagreements between indigenous and Europeans were the result. At the same time, what was considered luxury in Europe was perceived as necessity abroad and could lead to disagreements between Europeans themselves. In the long run, the association between Christianity and Europeaness had to be negotiated anew, as had the definition of certain values and the position of the values in relation to each other. The background of this negotiation was formed by the »third place«⁶⁶ in which missionaries and converts lived.

Résumé

Europe became an important figure for the missionaries, as, from the geographical distance and in the encounter with the Other, they discovered the commonalities between different European nations and cultures and »Europe« became a synonym for their home, the region of their origin. This was even strengthened by their cooperation on the mission field when missionaries with similar perceptions of Christianity collaborated. In this process, they began to develop a European Christian consciousness.

The European Christian consciousness was intensified by a common European historical consciousness. History was an important argument in

schen Klima nicht gerade alle die häuslichen Geschäfte verrichten kann, welche in der kühlen Heimath leicht von der Hand gehen, und daß möglicherweise einige Dinge hier in Bengalen Bedürfnisse seyn mögen, welche in Deutschland in das Verzeichniß des Luxus gehören«. He continues: »[...] Auch freute ich mich, als ich die Gattinnen von zwei Missionarien den Tisch decken, das Essen hereintragen und anordnen sah. Indessen wird es kein Missionsfreund meiner I. Gattin verdenken, wenn sie statt dessen eine Anzahl von Waisenmädchen unterrichtet und jene Geschäfte durch zwei derselben, die sie selber dazu abgerichtet hat, versehen läßt«. *Heidenbote* (1840): 80. Similarly see *Church Missionary Record* (1830): 30.

64 See e.g.: »he attempted more than the climate allows Europeans to perform with safety« on Henry Brooks who arrived in Sierra Leone on 2 February 1825 and died on 3 May of the same year. *Church Missionary Record* (1832): 267.

65 *Ibid.*: 28 (Samuel Gobat).

66 See Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1–28. Mary Louise Pratt calls this »contact zones«: Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes. Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, New York: Routledge, 1992), 6.

missionary debates and European colonial history as well as European religious history constituted the main points of reference. Particularly in the case of colonial history, European commonalities were perceived as more important than differences. The wrongs of European history had to be amended by Christianity. In view of the Other, European homogeneity was underscored.

The European imprint of early nineteenth-century evangelical Christianity became visible when confronted with other cultures and religions. The missionaries and their readers by and by became conscious of the fact that Christianity, in its nineteenth-century manifestation, was partly European. At the same time, when non-Christian behaviour was associated with non-Europeans and Christian faith with European behaviour, the link between Europe and Christianity became even stronger.

To a certain extent, the missionary encounter with the Other made Christianity ›European‹. Gradually, this uncovered the particularity of the European evangelical version of Christianity and thus turned European Christianity into something that could be regarded as the ›Other‹.