

The founders and their world

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The Basel Mission was founded by members of the Pietist network that had formed around the German Christentumsgesellschaft, which Chapter II described. Its founders included merchants, pastors and craftsmen of Basel. Its first director, the inspector Christian Gottlieb Blumhardt, came from Württemberg, where Pietism was strong.¹ The mission drew its missionaries largely from the rural and artisan population of Württemberg and Switzerland, young men with a practical education who could build houses, cultivate fields, teach crafts and preach.

The mission was financed by donations from supporters in Switzerland, Germany and elsewhere. Its supporters were organised in local mission associations, which collected small contributions, held meetings, distributed mission periodicals and prayed for the missionaries. The support network extended to thousands of households, many of them modest, and it was supplemented by larger donations from wealthy Pietists, among them members of the Basel *Daig*. The financing of the mission by a broad base of small donors, organised through a network of associations and informed by regular publications, anticipated the fundraising methods of modern non-governmental organisations.²

The mission was governed by a committee of Basel citizens, many of them merchants and bankers, who brought their commercial experience to the management of a growing international organisation. The committee administered the finances, appointed and supervised the missionaries, set the policies of the mission and managed its property. The presence of merchants on the committee explains in part why the Basel Mission, more than other missionary societies, combined its religious work with economic activities.

1 Notes

1. On Christian Gottlieb Blumhardt (1779–1838), first inspector of the Basel Mission from 1816, see HLS, article "Blumhardt, Christian Gottlieb". To be verified. ↩
2. On the financing of the Basel Mission through a network of mission associations and small donations in Switzerland and southern Germany, see the literature on the history of the Basel Mission. To be verified. ↩

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