THE PROTESTANT CHURCH IN MALABAR

Chapter III

THE PROTESTANT CHURCH IN MALABAR

Basel Mission is a child of eighteenth century pietism. Pietism was originally a charismatic revolution against the rigid Lutheran church practices. Pietism gave birth to the German Christian society for promoting ‘Christian truth’. Piety by correspondence and circulating religious books in opposition to the reign of infidelity.¹ This association had its centre in the city of Basel² and carried on their work mainly through theological trained young secretaries from the Tubingen University, Germany.³

In the early years of the nineteenth century when European nations were trembling under the boots of the ever progressing, restless army of Napoleon, the Kingdoms of Britain, Germany and Russia combined to stem the thrust of this all conquering might.⁴

The French General Barbanegre, being besieged by the allies in the neighbouring fortress of Hunningeu, spread terror by bombing⁵ and swore that his canons would blow up Basel into bits.⁶ Having heard this threat,

² The City of Basel is situated on the Frontiers of Germany, France and Switzerland.
⁶ K.J.John, op. cit., p.234
a circle of friends at Basel, lovers of the church and of mankind who were partly Swiss, partly German and members of the German Christian Society prayed and made a vow that if the Allied force won they would send missionaries to other countries for the propagation of the gospel. Napoleon was defeated at ‘Waterloo’ and thus on the 25th September 1815, six Christian men under the presidency of Rev. Nickolaus Von Brunn constituted themselves as the Evangelical Missionary society of Basel. They adapted Calvinistic theology in their doctrinal position.

On the 26th of August 1816, the missionary college of Basel was opened, under the auspices of Basel Evangelical Mission Committee. Their aim was “to train young men in the task of carrying the gospel of Peace into the different parts of the world.” Graduates from the mission colleges were working for British and Dutch missionary societies in different countries.

The B.E.M.S. sent missionaries for church missionary society (CMS) in India in the late 1820’s and 30’s. In the summer of 1820, the committee was invited by the Scottish Missionary Society to send out two missionaries as evangelist to the Jews of the Southern Provinces of Russia.

8. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p.376.
In 1821 during the celebration of its anniversary a Resolution was passed that "the society should make an attempt to establish missions of their own, while the original plan of training missionaries for the service of other societies should still be carried on." Accordingly the Basel Mission started sending missionaries in their own banker. They sent missionaries to the provinces of the Caucasus and to Persia. Then the missionaries were sent to Western Africa and also to the Western coast of India.

**Basel German Evangelical Missionary Society in India**

As soon as the British Parliament declared India open also for non-British missionaries in 1833, the B.M. sent its first three missionaries namely J.C. Lehner, C.L. Griener and Samuel Hebich to India, to work under the banner 'The Basel Evangelical Missionary Society'.

The three missionaries reached Calicut, the Capital of the erstwhile Malabar on the 13th of October 1834, then proceeded to Mangalore in the same year on the West coast of South Canara and settled there. Later at Mulki and Udupi in South Canara, mission centers were opened. Four others followed in 1836 when Dharwar in the Southern Mahratta country

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was occupied\textsuperscript{16} by the English. In 1838 five brethren were sent out after whose arrival a new station was erected at Hubly.\textsuperscript{17} In later years stations were established at Goolledgood in 1851 and Beltigheri in 1853. Special circumstances compelled to opening of a mission in Coorg in 1853.\textsuperscript{18} The location of Stations at Anandpur and at Kette introduced the Basel missionaries soon to the lofty and healthy Blue Mountains (Nilgiris).

**Basel German Evangelical Mission in Malabar**

In 1838, a German brother named Hermann Gundert formerly employed among the Tamil People as a missionary of the church Missionary Society (CMS) in Tuticorin joined the Basel Mission and established himself at Tellicherry. It was a gift of a hill and a bungalow made by the District Judge of North Malabar to Hermann Gundert that led Basel Mission to open its first station in this district at Nettur near Tellicherry in 1839. In due course it was followed by stations at Cannanore (1841), in Calicut (1857) and in Palakkad (1858).\textsuperscript{19} The number of missionaries who were labouring on eight different stations was twenty three.\textsuperscript{20} The evangelistic work and educational work went on hand in hand because the educational work was directed towards

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{16} Basel Mission Report, *op.cit.*, p.31.
\item \textsuperscript{17} *Ibid.*, p.32.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Julius Ritcher, *History of India Missions*. Edinburgh-Anderson, 1908, p.196.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Basel Mission Report, *op.cit.*, p.32.
\end{itemize}
educating the masses through primary schools and then spreading the gospel. The Basel Mission Missionaries had been supported by a large number of English officials in Malabar. They were also involved in industrial activities as the need for providing jobs to converts arose.21

The Basel Mission consisted mainly of German missionaries and when the First World War broke out they had to leave India because Germany was the enemy country of Britain and Germans were regarded as spies.22 Then the Swiss Basel Missionaries took up the work. In 1919 the Basel Mission joined South India United Church (S.I.U.C) and later in 1947 it became a part of church of South India (C.S.I). At present the six main stations mentioned above come under the jurisdiction of C.S.I. Diocese of North Kerala and most of the schools established during the period under study function as C.S.I. B.E.M. Schools in Kasaragode, Kannur, Kozhikode, Malappuram and Palakkad revenue districts of Kerala.

Christianity in Malabar is almost as old as the Christian era and finds expression in three district communities enforcing to the three broad divisions of the universal church. The Syrian Christian community of the West Coast which had its headquarters in Travancore and traces its origin

from the Apostle St. Thomas\textsuperscript{23} has preserved in this district the picturesque traditions of Eastern church. Roman Catholicism, on the other hand, gained a foot hold in Malabar at a much later date, when the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama opened up a new route to this coast for European commerce and European culture.\textsuperscript{24} The Protestant faith was the last to arrive. It was not till 1839 that the Basel Mission society to whose labour and sacrifice to majority of Protestant Christians in Malabar owe their conversion established their first outpost in this district.

At first the Basel Mission society had no intention of engaging in direct missionary activity. Their object was merely to train missionaries for other societies which had already started evangelistic work in Foreign lands.

In fact, many British and continental society took advantage of the facility provided by the college at Basel. The largest number of missionaries from this college seems to have been supplied to the church missionary society and came to their fields in India. A few years after the origin when contributions increased, naturally the Basel Mission society was emboldened to establish missions of their own in Africa, the West Coast of India, and China. The first batch of three missionaries for this coast landed at Calicut in 1834, and traveling north wards commenced work with their head-quarters at Mangalore in South Canara.

\textsuperscript{23} K.P. Padmanabha Menon, \textit{A History of Kerala}, Notes on letter XVI, p.3 and 5.  
\textsuperscript{24} Gazetteer of Malabar, Chapter III, pp. 20-21.
Dr. H. Gundert and Rev. Samuel Hebich, the two pioneer missionaries who blazed the trail for the Basel Mission in Malabar were both men of outstanding personality. Endowed with rare spiritual influence, and talents differing the one from the other. These two men proved to be an uncommonly happy combination, and have left behind a lasting impression upon the Malabar church. Together they inaugurated those lines of activity which have been successfully continued by the mission up to the present time. The open air sermons which Samuel Hebich delivered often amidst much opposition, at crowded fairs or festivals, and the courage as well as unexpected triumph with which he carried the Gospel to the dreaded homes of military officers at Cannanore, won for him an almost mythical celebrity in these parts. Dr. Gundert, a brilliant scholar of the Tubingen University, on the other hand gave his life to the literary and educational work of the mission. As the author of the first Standard Dictionary and Grammar in Malayalam not to mention many text books in history, geography and other subjects for mission. Schools he has contributed greatly to cultural efflorescence.\(^{25}\)

As conversions increased and the mission’s sphere of activity expanded, additions also were made from time to time to the number of Europeans workers stationed in this district. Just before the Great European war there were about seventy missionary ladies and men

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\(^{25}\) G.N. Thomsen, *Samuel Hebich of India*, Chapter XIV, Cuttack, India, p.15.
labouring in Malabar. But it was evident from the very beginning that the needs of a growing church and the many thousands of non-Christians by whom they were surrounded could not be adequately met by foreign missionaries alone. Therefore educational facilities were provided to train Malayalee Christians both for the ministry and for educational work.

In addition to Elementary Schools intended for propagating the Gospel through the length and breadth of Malabar, special institutions were founded in every Christian congregation to raise the percentage of literacy in the community. From these Parochial Schools which mostly taught up to the Vth class, capable. Students could proceed to one of the High schools, or the second grade college maintained by the mission. Parents who were unable to meet the full expenses of giving a high school education to their children were invited to send them to the Boarding Home maintained at Nettur in connection with one of the secondary schools. Those who were chosen for the ministry after their high school course were at first sent to Mangalore for a four years theological education, but afterwards a Theological Seminary for Malayalee candidates was opened at Nettur. Here the mission also maintained a normal school in order to train teachers for the many


elementary schools under their management. Thus in 1913, the Basel mission had in Malabar about 280 Indian workers consisting of evangelists, Bible women, Christian school masters, Christian school mistresses and non-christian teachers. In addition to the educational institutions mentioned above the mission also maintained two orphanages and four hospitals, specially for the benefit of the society. As facilities for medical aid have rapidly increased in the district, and the mission had to face serious financial difficulties, the medical department was practically closed some years ago.

It was Rev. J. Josenhans, principal of the college for missionaries at Basel and General Secretary of the Mission, who was deputed by the Hane Committee in 1851 to inspect their Indian Field, that gave ecclesiastical laws and a social organization to the infant church. On arrival he found that the Malayalee converts who were gathered together from different sections of Hindu society formed four isolated congregations at Cannanore, Tellicherry, Chombala, and Calicut. Like other churches which had been founded by the Basel Mission in South Mahratta, South Canara and the Nilgris, these congregations were without a uniform system of government or a co-ordinated plan of action. To ensure the ordered development of a United Basel Mission church in Western India Rev. J. Josenhans found it necessary to devise for the converts the pattern of a new social order and ecclesiastical polity.29 The

measures which he took to this end may well be described in the words of his own biographer.

He defined the duties and rights of the missionaries towards the Home Committee and among themselves laid down different rules of business and arranged a division of labour and supervision. In accordance with this the missionaries have their regular local meetings which took place as often as required, district meetings when all the Missionaries of the same district meet once a year and General Meetings when the different office bearers and deputies from all four mission districts met every four years for consultation, and to advise the Home Committee.

As regards the congregations, he collected the rules which different missionaries had found useful for the guidance of their churches and compiled a short compendium of church rules. He also formed Presbyteries for each Parish, and Synods for each District in which the Europeans were to be ex-officio members.\(^\text{30}\)

To enable each church to look after its own spiritual wants he also created church funds, which he endowed with fields and coconut gardens, formerly belonging to the Mission and imposed church-taxes and encouraged charity. He further appointed a committee composed of Mogling and Gundert, and Ammann to make a selection from the Prayer

\(^{30}\) Ibid., p.36.
Books of the different Lutheran and Reformed Churches for the compilation of a Liturgy, which was to be translated into Canarese, Malayalam, Tulu and English in order to be read in the different Basel German Evangelical Mission churches.

From the middle of the 19th century, when Rev. J. Josenhans visited Malabar down to the outbreak of the world war when the Basel Mission had to suspend its activities for a time, there was slow but steady progress in the church. In 1851 there were four congregations with a membership of about 50 in Malabar.31

By 1913 it had grown to eight stations and about forty outstations with a membership of nearly 7600. This progress was not, however, confined to numerical strength. During these six decades the church had been gradually advancing towards the attainment of both self support and self government.

In 1861 annual contributions from members towards the expenses of the church amounted to about 6½ annas per head.32 By 1912 the average contribution per church member had risen to Rs.150. Similarly great strides had been made also towards self government. Indian pastors were, whenever possible, given independent positions. They were not only made responsible for conducting divine services, and the

management of Parochial Schools but had as a rule also to preside over the meetings of the presbyteries. In the Presbyteries of the larger stations, where the number of Europeans missionaries was great, the Europeans were not allowed to occupy more than \( \frac{1}{3} \) of the seats on the Presbytery. Similarly the number of European members in District Synods too was reduced. In addition to this the Home Committee also sanctioned the formation of a General Synod Board composed of three European members elected by the three synods. The General Synod Board was authorized to govern the whole church on the west coast according to the existing church rules.\(^{33}\)

The World War which broke out in 1914 imparted to the progress of the church a momentum which almost proved its ruin. The Basel Mission was considered by the Government to be a German organization. Most of the missionaries, being Germans, had to leave for the internment camp, and all properties which belonged to the Basel Mission were taken over by the custodian of Enemy Property.\(^{34}\) What attempts other missionary societies made to get back these properties for the benefit of the Malabar church found itself deprived of the spiritual guidance and financial support which the Basel Mission had so generously supplied for 75 years.

\(^{33}\) The Seventy-third Report of the Basel Mission in South Western India for 1912. The Indian Church, Pecuniary Contributions.

\(^{34}\) Minutes of the Malabar church Council August 1920.
Along with other mission fields operated by German missions in India, the activities in Malabar also were handed over by the Government to the National Missionary. The German Missions committee of the National Missionary council approached various missionary societies with a request to undertake the responsibilities from which the Basel Mission had been compelled so abruptly to withdraw.

At last the South India United church agreed to shoulder the responsibility, if the Malabar church should affiliate itself with that body. As negotiations for effecting such a union had been set on foot before the Basel mission was compelled to withdraw from the field the Malabar church did not feel much difficulty in accepting the proposal. Accordingly in 1919, the representatives of the Malabar church met and adopted a new Constitution investing the Government of the Malabar church in a body of elected representatives called the Malabar church council and affiliating the Malabar church with the federation of south Indian churches known as the S.I.U.C. In order to carry on the day to day administration of the church, the Malabar church council was to appoint an executive committee in which missionaries who came to Malabar as Representatives of the S.I.U.C. were to have their place.35

The jurisdiction of the church council and the church board was however rigidly circumscribed. While technically they possessed almost

unqualified power in administering the affairs directly connected with the government of the church, they were dependent to a very large extent for their finances upon the S.I.U.C. Besides the evangelistic medical and educational departments of the late Basel Mission were kept entirely beyond the Purview of the church council. The original intention of the S.I.U.C. seems to have been to separate these three departments from the administration of the church, and keep them directly under their supervision. But in response to a request made by the Malabar church Board it was afterwards resolved to grant them an active part in the management of what is called “mission work” as well. These arrangements, however, proved to be a source of endless friction and strife in the church. Owing to representations made by the S.I.U.C., therefore, the German Missions Committee finally removed mission work from the supervision of the church council in 1925.36

Under the new arrangement the financial Situation of the church council deteriorated to such an extent that the church board was compelled to handover the orphanages and parochial schools to the Mission committee.37

In 1927 when the Basel Mission took back the responsibility for mission work in Malabar more prosperous days seemed to have set in for the church. But trouble started over certain changes which were made in

36. Minutes of the Malabar Church, August, 1925.
37. Minutes of the Malabar Church, February, 1926, p.6.
the constitution in order to facilitate co-operation between the church and
the mission. The political situation of Germany and the unexpected fall in
the financial resources of the Basel Mission threw up another cloud over
the horizon. The subsidy which the basel mission had been giving to the
church council since the missionaries returned to Malabar was reduced
after 1933 and the church council was moreover compelled by the turn of
events to take back from the mission the responsibility for the parochial
schools.

The Basel Mission Church in Malabar consisted of fourteen
Pastorates. All these pastorates were situated on the Plains. The Wynad
taluk, remained unexplored by protestant missionaries till 1880 when the
Basel mission resolved to open a new station at Manantoddy.38

Eleven years later Rev. A.H.Lash, the first C.M.S. missionary in
the Nilgiris realized the need for Pastoral care among the Christian
labourers who flocked to the tea and coffee estates in Synad. Thus M.
Sathyanathan Harding was appointed catechist at Gudalur in the Nilgiris
district and until his death in 1911, gave very devoted pioneer service,
particularly among the Kurchiars and Kurumbers. At the start there was
about 175 baptized protestant Christians, mostly immigrants from the
Tamil country. In course of time the membership of the church had risen
to 1700. But from the beginning the Waynad Mission had been

38. The Forty-third Report of the Basel Evangelical Mission in South Western India
for 1882. Section III on Malabar.
practically a private enterprise of the Nilgris Missionary with little or no support from the C.M.S. Headquarters. The necessary funds were raised either locally, or from friends in England.  

Anglican churches are not, however confined to Waynad. For, in addition to stray families attached to the established church of India at Cannanore, Tellicherry, Palakkad and Malappuram, there is an Indian Pastorate of the Madras Diocese in Calicut. Its beginning are to be sought in the prayer meetings of Indian Anglicans, which, in the eighties of the 20th century, were conducted in the local Basel Mission church. The original congregation was mostly Tamil, and was ministered to by Tamil Clergy men for many years and at present the Pastorate is affiliated to the society for the propagation of the Gospel.

No Account of the Protestant church in Malabar will be complete without a reference to the Sectarian denominations which affected it. For, though numerically their adherents were at the bottom of the scale, forming but a small minority of the protestant church, these denominations were not united.

Conversion – A Break with the Past

The circumstances connected with conversion have often exercised a very far reaching influence upon the economic development of


40. Annual Report of the St. Mary’s Church Indian Pastorate, Calicut for the year 1936, p.11.
Christian communities. Mass movements have for example, “by preserving the integration of the individual in his group.” Protected many churches from social dislocation and economic loss.41 Mass movements do not however, account for the entire protestant community in India. According to J.R. Mott about 80% of the protestants are the product of mass movements. The remaining 20% consist of those who embraced Christianity either as individuals or in families, and their descendants.

The social and economic problems which early missionaries created by isolating such converts from their natural environment have led many observers in modern times to be critical of their policy and to deplore its consequences. The Bankura Christian community of Bengal may be mentioned as a typical example of what is called “conversion by extraction”.42 Fifty years ago no such thing as the local Christian community is said to have existed. Land was purchased and the Christian village came into existence. An economic survey of the community made before the Tambaram (Madras) Conference (1858), however, shows that a considerable blunder of strategy was committed when those families who were agriculturists were uprooted from their home and established in a place where they were given no land for cultivation. Instead of creating a virile, self supporting Christian society, this experiment, like similar

41. Christian Mass Movements in India, Chapter XV.
42. W. Hoch, Missions of the Basel Society in Canara and Malabar.” In Proceedings of the South India Missionary Conference held at Tambaram, Madras, April 19, 1858.
experiments elsewhere, is said to have produced a generation which looks for sustenance to the mission which took their fathers from their original villages.  

The annals of the Protestant church in Malabar do not contain a single instance of mass conversion. There was of course, some indication of a tendency towards mass movement among the Thiyyas in the first decade of this century. In 1892 Potheri Kunhambu a Tiyya vakil wrote in his Saraswativijayam about the pulayas of Malabar who were in a sad state. He explains that they oscillated between the worlds of colonial modernity and tradition, belonging wholly to neither. But being of the lower castes, not only his knowledge of the upper Sanskrit reaches of Hindu tradition of no avail to him, he is also excluded from it on the grounds of his lower being. Education is the greatest wealth – the epigraph to his novel states the central message and hears it aloft like a standard. He was involved with the education and upliftment of the pulayas of Malabar.

One can understand Saraswativijayam only as part of Kunhambu’s persistent and agonized engagement with the Hindu tradition of which he was a part but which denied him a place within it. Saraswativijayam was a radical novel for its time with its fierce critique of the injustice of caste


44. Sixty seventh report of the Basel Evangelical Mission in South Western India for the year 1906.
and the emancipatory message of education for lower castes. The stagnation and iniquity of traditional society is contrasted with the promise of equality and freedom brought about by colonialism and the missionary presence. 45 But this did not take place. From the very beginning converts have entered the Basel Mission church in Malabar in isolated families or as individuals. And except in the case of two new stations opened by the Basel Mission at Madai and Mattul after the Great war, converts have been, for reasons which will be presently examined, uprooted from their home and village to begin life at a common centre under new conditions. The narrow exclusiveness of the caste system as it is practiced in Malabar made it impossible for a convert to continue in the society to which he belonged. At the last census it was found in the united provinces that converts to Christianity remained in their caste, interdining and intermarrying freely with non-Christian members. In fact cases seem to have been mentioned where the arrangement had survived for thirty years after conversion. 46

Although the most progressive Hindu families have now begun to make a concession in the matter of inter-dining such free and unfettered social intercourse between Christian converts and the members of the castes to which they previously belonged is not known anywhere in Malabar today. It would have been unimaginable in the last century.


On the other hand, Physical contact with a convert is considered in three parts to make an orthodox Hindu ceremonially unclean converts have been regarded in Malabar as outcastes and even the nearest relations gave up all intercourse with one who embraced Christianity.

The Marumakkathayam system of family organisation and inheritance prevalent in Malabar made the convert’s fate all the more precarious. Under this system "a mother and all her children, both male and female, all her grandchildren by her daughters, all her brothers, and sisters and the descents on the sister’s side, however distant their relationship, live together in the same block of buildings, have a common table, enjoy all her property and share it after her death in common with one another." There are wealthy Nair towards with about two hundred members belonging to different branches and separated from one another by generations of descent, yet all able to trace their descent from one common ancestress. When a member belonging to such a joint family embraced Christianity, the penalties decreed by caste made it impossible for him to continue in their midst, and banished him at once from home and kindred. Conversion from Hinduism could not, therefore, give a member of a Marumakkathayam joint family the right to a partition of the tarward property which was impartible under the Marumakkathayam law as it existed before 1933. All that the convert could claim was to continue to reside in the house and be maintained as before if the other members

were willing to share his company, or to get separate residence and maintenance allowance allotted to him, if the other members refused to live with the convert. Even in the case of Hindu families which did not follow the Marumakkathayam system, the Mitakshara law was not modified by local custom and usage that it was very seldom a convert could get an adequate share of the joint property. The opposition from the local Janmy usually gave the finishing touch to the picture of a convert's helplessness. Thus for example Weismann of Chombala made repeated attempts to induce the Hindu landlords to allow converts to remain in their rented houses and compounds but his entreaties met with the stout refusals. For those who forsake their ancestral caste and customs, we have neither house nor gardens.\textsuperscript{48}

The isolation which the Malabar church suffered in the land of its birth has not, however been without its compensation.

On account of its isolation from the environment, the Basel Mission church in Malabar has remained singularly free from this taint. Though drawn from many mutually exclusive castes in the most caste ridden district in India, the members of the church have been welded by common tribulation and a common faith into a homogeneous brotherhood.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{48} The Fifty seventh Report of the Basel Evangelical Mission in south Western India 1896, p.49.

\textsuperscript{49} J.W. Pickett, Christian Mass Movements in India, Madras, p. 336.
Literacy Education and Occupations

As the world meeting of the International Missionary council held at Tambaram, Madras (1938) declared "Education is and must always be a major concern of the church." For no other process in modern life enables the rising generation to appreciate their social heritage so well, or to play their part so efficiently in working for its fulfilment. The church will therefore took largely to the Christian primary schools for the ideas and attitudes which sway the majority of its members. The Christian high schools and colleges will decide the kind of leadership which is to guide the church on its journey.

Literacy might be only one of the avenues to education. But even so its effect upon the economic well being of a community was great. For this ability, protects the poor villager against Fraud in accounts, enlarges his vision, increased his efficiency enabled him to give up habits which undermine his health or dissipate his resources and fires him with fresh hope and new aspirations. Commenting upon the lack of education among industrial workers the Royal commission on harbour, remarked. In India nearly the whole mass of industrial labour was illiterate, a state of affairs which was unknown in any other country of industrial importance. It was almost impossible to over estimate the consequences of this disability, which was obvious in wages, in health in productivity in organization and in several other directions. When the Malabar church

became an autonomous body elementary schools which specially served Christian congregations were handed over by the mission to the church.\textsuperscript{51} Among the mission schools three were secondary schools for boys, one a girls' high school and another a second grade college. Pastor's and Presbyteries from the early days of the Malabar church exercised their influence to see that Christians parents do not neglect the facilities that were provided for the education of their children.

The table\textsuperscript{52} will show extent of the educational activities of the Basel Mission church.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage among total population</th>
<th>Percentage among males</th>
<th>Percentage among females</th>
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<tr>
<td>Indian Christian in the presidency</td>
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<td>Muslims</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Basel Mission church Malabar</td>
<td>87</td>
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<td>82</td>
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</table>

\textsuperscript{51} Minutes of the Malabar church council, October, 1938, p.28.

\textsuperscript{52} Census of India (1931) Vol. 14, Part I, p.278.
Malabar was well known in south India for its literacy. But even in such an area the percentage of literates within the Basel mission church stands far above the district ratio. Educational institutions and church rules alone could hardly have accomplished this feat. For such rules were not always strictly enforced and many children who left school before completing the fifth standard rapidly lapse into illiteracy. In the words of the Hartog Committee “The explanation of such relapse is simple. Retention of initial literacy acquired at the early age of ten or eleven depends largely on environment, and the environment of the great majority of Indian pupils, who leave school at the primary stage is not conducive to such retention.” The parents in the village home were usually illiterate they were too poor to buy books and attractive vernacular literature and periodicals suitable for children were not available, though there were vernacular books which might be read by children under religious impulse.53

Condition within the church had on the contrary been much more favourable to the retention of literacy. Almost every Christian home, however contains, a Bible and a hymn-book which the inmates often read. Besides many religious tracts and pamphlets were within their reach. Popular journals published either by the mission or the church too have helped poor Christians to exercise their ability to read. Thus on the

eve of the world war more than 600 copies of a Malayalam fortnightly magazine called *Keralopakari* and about 850 copies of a Malayalam monthly called *Balamitram* were printed by the mission for circulation in the Malabar church.\textsuperscript{54} After the war journalism within the Basel mission church had a very uncertain career. Owing to financial difficulties the church council had to discontinue various publications.

The existence of Christian high school and a Christian second grade college was a great incentive to higher education in the Malabar church. In addition to free scholarships or loans granted to deserving Christian candidates by mission schools and the mission college a stipend fund with a capital of about Rs.20,000/- was also established by the mission for the whole mission field on this coast. Loans without interest were granted from this fund to Christian students who desired to go outside Malabar higher education. Of course among the applicants preference was given to those candidates whose services were likely to be needed by the mission. The loans should be returned in easy instalments, and the amount available for fresh applicants in any year depended upon the repayments already made. Fee concessions and scholarships granted by first grade colleges maintained by other missions in south India too had been of considerable help in securing the benefits of a university education for young men and women from the Basel mission church.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{54} *Ibid.*, p.73.

\textsuperscript{55} *Minutes of the Malabar Council*, 1931, August, p. 16.
### Educational qualifications by Age Groups (Males)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Age</th>
<th>Percentage of the total number in each age group</th>
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<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Educational qualifications by Age Groups (Females)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Percentage of the total number in each age group</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>Just literate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The proportion of boys who left the high school classes without being able to secure a complete S.S.L.C. certificate was comparatively high. Financial difficulties were not the only obstacle in their way. Owing probably to underfeeding many boys who came from poor families were too slow to profit by a high school course. The number of those who failed to appreciate the facilities that were provided for their education also remained fairly large. Among over 8000 members whose educational qualifications were ascertained 289 males 300 females had successfully undergone courses in professional training –mostly in teaching, divinity or medicine – but only 31 males and 9 females could mention any technical examinations they had passed.56

Although facilities for technical education were formerly very limited in Malabar, the Basel Mission Industries offered an opportunity to get practical experiences in many branches of textile manufacturing, tile manufacturing and mechanical engineering. Technical and technological courses outside Malabar which involve long years of training are moreover above means of most families in Basel Mission church. The literacy and education had been a little help to the members of the Malabar church in finding employment. For within the church only 35% of the total population was employed as against 56% in the presidency and 39% in Malabar. But in comparing the percentage of workers within the church with the percentage outside among Basel Mission Christians

56. Ibid., p.17.
most children between 5 and 15 went to school in the 1930s. Among other communities in Malabar and the presidency the majority of children did not, except in rare cases, attend school.

An analysis of the unemployed in the community according to educational qualifications throws some light upon the problem of finding employment. More than half the unemployed males in the community belong to the lowest educational group.

With reference to the economic consequences of education, the Basel mission church in Malabar forms a deplorable contrast to the Syrian Christian community in Travancore. In 1821, the Syrian Christians were economically so backward that Mar Dionysius III, the Syrian Metropolitan of Malankara wrote in a letter to the then British Resident of Travancore as follows:

The majority of the Puthencoor Syrians were poor and support themselves by daily labour. Others employed themselves in merchandise and agriculture. There were very few indeed among them possessing property worth five thousand rupees.” But the progress of literacy and education had enabled Syrian Christian in the course of a hundred years to complete successfully with other advanced communities in every walks of life. The spread of education and the opening of salaried posts

seemed to have created an economic regeneration in the community.\textsuperscript{58} The savings from the salaries and the professional incomes became the capital necessary for the starting of trade and industries. The progress of higher education in the community enabled them to compete successfully with others in public administration, the professions, and liberal arts.\textsuperscript{59}

Although the percentage of literates stood remarkably high in the Malabar church and higher education had made steady progress among the members, no economic regeneration such as we find in the Syrian Christian community in Travancore had taken place here. For it was only after the world war that educated young men from the Basel mission church began to enter government service in sufficiently large numbers. Secondly employment opportunities were comparatively more in Travancore and Cochin than in Malabar. Added to this was the attitude of the early missionaries who tended to regard seeking employment anywhere outside the mission with disfavour.

At the outbreak of the world war when the Basel mission was for a time compelled to withdraw from India the vast majority of educated men among Basel mission Christians were therefore employed under the mission. The war either closed or restricted these opportunities. And for a time the Malabar church had to pass through a period of great

\textsuperscript{58} P.C.Joseph, \textit{The Economic and social environment of the church in North Travancore and Cochin}. CMS College, Kottayam, p. 70.

\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Ibid.}, p.71.
suffering. Such difficulties, however turned the rising generation to other avenues.\textsuperscript{60}

Mission Christians to solve partly the problems created by the action of the British government. The table below indicate part of this solution.

**Occupations in the Basel Mission Church, Malabar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Percentage of workers under each head in the Basel mission church</th>
<th>Percentage of workers under each head in Malabar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Exploitation of animals and vegetation</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Exploitation of minerals</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Industry</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Transport</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Public service (including teachers, nurses etc under government or local bodies)</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Profession and liberal arts</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Persons living on their income</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Domestic service</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Others</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{60} The Fifty fifth report of the Basel Evangelical Mission in South Western India, 1894, p.57.
Tack of variety formed the main characteristic of occupational distribution among the Basel mission Christian in Malabar. According to the above table the majority of people find employment in industry or professions and the other main departments of activity are also adequately represented.\textsuperscript{61}

More than half of those who are classified as carrying in trade are only clerks in commercial establishments. About three fourths of those engaged in professions and the liberal arts are servants of the church or the mission, nearly 90\% of those who are described as engaged in the exploitation of animals and vegetation are agricultural labours, practically all those mentioned under transport are employed in motor vehicles or the railway. Not only have Basel mission Christians failed to spreads out on the economic field, but have in fact lost some of their original occupations. Scores of Fishermen have joined the Basel Mission church in Malabar. But among workers whose occupations were examined in 1931 only one solitary individual was found to carry on fishing as an occupation. The majority of converts who entered the church must originally have been cultivators; but in 1931 cultivation occupied a very insignificant place among occupations in the community. The aversion with which non Christians considered a convert often made it impossible for him to pursue his previous employment. Under the prevailing system of land tenure agriculturists especially could get no land for cultivation.

The disabilities of the caste system moreover led converts to look with contempt on the occupation which was connected with the iniquitous social organization from which they had escaped. To the vast majority of artisans and peasants who embraced Christianity the industrial establishments started by the mission offered the means of earning a comfortable livelihood.

In fact the spread of literacy within the church enabled the members to adjust themselves to conditions in the factory with much less trouble than they could otherwise have done.62 Besides the more intelligent and better educated among the members were rapidly absorbed into the evangelistic and educational departments of the mission.