



Protestant Missions and European Empires: Allies or Adversaries

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So, in this final lecture of this series on the early global spread of Protestantism, we will finally turn to look head-on at the question I've been dancing around all year. That is, is this really a story about religion or about politics? About faith or about power? Well, obviously it's both, but how does the relationship work? I hope that at this late stage some of the outline is already clear. The colonial and maritime-commercial projects that a series of Protestant states and entrepreneurs were engaged in in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did include religious motives, including the hope to spread their religion to the peoples they met, amongst their objectives. The grounds for those motives ranged from burning concern to save perishing souls, through a wish to civilise and pacify peoples for whom they had decided to assume responsibility, to the hope that religion could be used to cement alliances and stymie colonial rivals. And ministers, preachers and missionary enthusiasts were generally ready to work within the framework of imperial power, with varying degrees of reservation or enthusiasm. But deep-rooted as it was, this alliance of convenience only went so far. Neither side wholly accepted the other's priorities; nor did they trust each other. As mating spiders could tell you, just because two sides need one another does not mean their relationship will be enduring and harmonious.

In this final lecture I want to explore the contours of this dysfunctional relationship, what it meant and where it went. And I'll do that in two ways. First, because all this generalisation is already getting tedious, I want to pick out a few examples: three particular stories from across the globe, contrasting cases that I think help to illuminate some of the issues at work quite nicely. And then I want to turn to the question of how this early stage of Protestant missions came to an end: the real shift not just in the tempo but in the mood of missionary enterprises that becomes unmistakable by around the year 1800. Because how that came about is, I believe, really illuminating when we are trying to understand how mission and empire became so fruitfully and damagingly entangled.

But first, my stories. Let's begin with the island which was a key model both for Protestant empires and for Protestant missions, which was the original sin of Protestant globalisation, the island whose shadow fell on every subsequent British imperial project: Ireland. Ireland had been under an often rather nebulous English lordship since the twelfth century, but in the wake of the Protestant Reformation, that vague status quo was no longer tenable, and successive English regimes took it on themselves to make the claim into a reality. It was Elizabeth I who won the decisive victory, in the so-called Nine Years' War which ended in 1603. One of the many prices of this brutally Pyrrhic victory was that Ireland remained almost exclusively Catholic. Since the 1530s anti-English sentiment in Ireland had been expressed in part through loyalty to Rome – or perhaps the other way around – and it was widely accepted that even the solid citizens of Dublin only complied with England's religion as minimally as was necessary to hold office in the English administration. The Reformation in Ireland was an empty shell: in theory, a national Protestant church was created, and the Catholic Church outlawed, as in England, but this was not accompanied by any serious effort to convert the Irish people. In particular, there was virtually no interest shown in those whom the English called the 'wild Irish' or the 'native Irish', the majority of the island's population whose first language was Irish Gaelic. Protestants often suggested that converting the Irish would be a good

idea, both for its own sake and also to turn the Irish from incorrigibly treacherous popish rebels into settled, civil and obedient Protestant subjects. But it was difficult, distasteful, expensive and very uncertain, and there was a simpler, bloodier way to teach them obedience.

So, Ireland in the early seventeenth century settled into a strange religious stalemate. English rule was for the time being unchallenged and the entity which rather preposterously called itself 'the Church of Ireland' had all the legal privileges of an established church. But its congregations consisted almost exclusively of the new wave of English and Scottish immigrants, mixed with a scattering of Irish officialdom conforming for appearance's sake. The Catholic population were mostly left alone except when the established church's official structures extracted fees and fines from them. The Church of Ireland existed in an immigrant Protestant bubble, without the ghastly possibility of having the wild Irish in their churches. Empire, it seemed, had entirely trumped mission.

But occasionally the Church of Ireland was dealt a joker who disrupted that predictable game. I want to introduce you to William Bedell, who served as bishop of Kilmore from 1629-42: a stubborn, learned, idiosyncratic, politically inept and – by all accounts – saintly prelate. He was an Englishman, and until his friend James Ussher, the archbishop of Armagh, nominated him to be provost of Trinity College, Dublin in 1627, he had never set foot in Ireland. He was a learned country clergyman with an impeccable reputation and some friends in high places, and Ussher wanted an outsider to shake Trinity up a little. Bedell had no desire at all to go to Ireland, but he felt the nomination as a call from God.

The fellows of Trinity College soon concluded it was a dreadful mistake. Bedell was a fine scholar, but he was also an idealist. He arrived with distinctly un-Irish enthusiasms for ministering to Gaelic-speakers. He taught himself to read and write Gaelic, although he was never much of a speaker, and apparently never preached in it himself. He revived the lapsed provision in Trinity's statutes which stated that the college should train Gaelic-speakers. Within months the college was up in arms. But since he was unexpectedly and unacceptably doing exactly what he had been appointed to do, the only solution was to promote him out of trouble; so, in 1629 he was made bishop of the twin dioceses of Kilmore and Ardagh in Ireland's interior, places where the veneer of the Church of Ireland on top of the Catholic population was thin indeed. If he liked the wild Irish so much, let him wallow in them.

Bedell was more than ready for the challenge. He promptly resigned one of his two bishoprics, on the basis that moonlighting in that way was both immoral and illegal – an alarming early act of selfless and impractical idealism. He set out to serve as a missionary bishop. He won converts, including several Catholic priests, and he made it a priority to ordain Gaelic-speaking clergy. He sponsored the publication of Gaelic books and led a small team who spent the bulk of the 1630s producing a complete translation of the Old Testament.

We do not know how much success such a missionary approach might have had if it had been the start of something, rather than a one-off. But it does appear that he genuinely won some respect from his Gaelic-speaking flock. He made strenuous attempts to stop the Church of Ireland's financial exploitation of the population; he also made the most of a bishop's traditional role as a provider of hospitality. One eyewitness recalled that 'at Christmas he had the poor Irish to feast and sit about him'. The best proof that he had made an impression came during the Catholic rising against English and Protestant rule that erupted in the autumn of 1641. The English and the Protestants were targeted by the rebels: most of those who did not flee were thrown out onto the road destitute, or in some cases killed. But not William Bedell and his family. It was his duty to remain with his flock. The rebels who had seized power in the area urged him to leave for his own safety; he refused. Eventually he managed to negotiate safe passage for those who had taken refuge in his house, but he and his immediate family had to surrender themselves as hostages. They were kept under gentle house arrest, being permitted to practice their religion. But he was not a young man, his health was already wavering, and the disruption of that winter did him no favours. Someone in the house fell ill with typhus, and it swept through them all; Bedell died in February 1642. Remarkably, his son-in-law, another Church of Ireland minister, was allowed by their captors to bury him using the full

Protestant rite. At the funeral, an honour guard of O'Reillys accompanied the coffin, fired a volley over it and cried, 'Requiescat in pace ultimus Anglorum!' That could either mean the 'best' or the 'last' of the English: it probably meant both.

If an authentic Gaelic Reformation could ever have happened in Ireland, this is surely the only way it could have come. But the truth is that Bedell was almost entirely isolated within the Anglo-Irish establishment. The clergy of his diocese formed a wall of opposition against him, and he spent a great deal of his time, energy and money as bishop in a series of futile lawsuits against his own diocesan chancellor, who was running the church courts as something close to a protection racket. Not all of his opponents were mere moneygrubbers. His promotion of the Gaelic language was a threat to the very notion that civility, Christianity and Englishness were intertwined. The lead translator working for him was the target of a malicious, perilous and apparently quite unfounded lawsuit, which landed him in prison, and he died either while imprisoned or soon after his release. One of Bedell's few political victories came in a convocation in Dublin in 1634, where the bishop of Derry tried to close down Bedell's Gaelic projects. Bedell was supported, on that occasion at least, by his friend Archbishop Ussher, but the victory was an isolated one, and Ussher's backing for Bedell was only ever lukewarm. Beneath all the politics and finances, this was about prejudice. Bedell's son-in-law recalled once seeing the bishop quizzed by a sceptical Englishman about why he was so keen to reach out to the Gaelic Irish. As Bedell tried to answer, his questioner

"looked down steadfastly with derision upon his feet, and being asked why he did so? said, that he was seeing whether my L[ord] of K[ilmore] wore broges or no; thus jearing his Christian affection and compassion towards the poor Irish."

Christian affection and compassion, plainly, were not enough.

So, in this case, missionary projects and imperial concerns were absolutely at loggerheads. A missionary bishop tried to work within imperial power structures and to take the values those structures professed seriously; and he succeeded to the extent that he was allowed to remain in post with some patchy support, but in general he was isolated in life, and, after his death, much praised but little imitated. The lesson, apparently, is that empire will tolerate a certain amount of decorative mission, right up to the moment when it starts to challenge imperial interests.

Our second story is very different. We are now in the empire of the Dutch East India Company, which in the early 1620s was trying to establish itself as a dominant player in particular trade to and from Japan, where the Dutch were now the only outside power permitted to trade. But they needed a base of operations further south. After trying and failing to secure a foothold in China, the governor of one of the maritime Chinese provinces suggested that they could be granted trade rights if they based themselves, not on the mainland, but on the large island 180km off the coast. This was the island the Portuguese had dubbed *Ilha Formosa*, 'beautiful island': the Dutch simply called it Formosa. China had had some contact with the island, but almost its entire population was indigenous Austronesian, divided into many hundreds of self-governing villages. The Dutch first made landfall on the island in 1623 and came back with a larger force in 1624, in order to establish a permanent settlement at a natural harbour in the island's south-western corner: they adopted the indigenous name for this place, or a garbled version of it, and called it *Tayouan*, a version of the name by which we now know the entire island. They swiftly made contact with the nearest village, whose name was Sinkan, and managed to arrange to lease some land on which to build a fort. This had two purposes for the Dutch. First and foremost, it was simply a staging post at the northern end of the South China Sea, end route to Japan. And secondly, what would become increasingly important, it allowed them access to the goods that the island itself had to offer. Above all, that meant deerskins, which the Dutch would then ship to the lucrative Japanese market.

But naturally it wasn't as simple as that. There were already Chinese traders operating in the same market, and the Japanese were not entirely at ease with the high fees the Dutch were charging either. Both parties were perfectly capable of stirring up trouble on the island. It was in this context that, in 1625, the Dutch governor on the island – whose territory scarcely extended beyond the walls

of the hastily constructed fort – asked the East India Company to send him ‘two or three ministers or readers ... so the name of the Lord may be propagated and the barbarous inhabitants of this island may be added to the number of Christians. If a few capable persons work in this direction, I feel the harvest will be fruitful.’ The request was no doubt pious and heartfelt. It was also clearly directed towards securing the allegiance of the indigenous people.

It was picked up not only by the Company’s governor-general in their eastern capital at Batavia, the site of modern Jakarta, but by a newly arrived young German clergyman in Dutch service, the 26-year-old Georg Candidius, who has a claim to be the first professional Protestant missionary: he had spent two years in Leiden studying missions before his ordination and had come to the East with that specific purpose in mind. He was now sent to Formosa along with a new governor for the Dutch settlement there, but with firm instructions that the Company ‘did not want the mission to be introduced with great ostentation or fuss, so that the emperors of China and Japan might not be offended’. The new governor, however, almost immediately set off for Japan itself to try to patch things up there, and Candidius took matters into his own hands. He not only made contact with the village of Sinkan; within weeks, he had actually left the Dutch fort and moved there. He was welcomed with some caution: the Sinkanders seem to have decided that the Dutch could be useful allies. And he was bullishly optimistic about the prospect of missionary success there, certainly compared to the Indonesian archipelago. No Muslims to contend with, and no hostile kings; just a series of independent villages without established chieftancies, whose mutual rivalries were expressed in periodic headhunting raids but not in what we might call actual war. They followed their own indigenous religion in obedience to the priestesses who Candidius quickly identified as his main opponents: they scornfully challenged him to beat them at performing miracles. In a series of ambitious letters, Candidius laid out his plans for the island. He wanted a steady series of missionaries who would commit to stay for a decade or more, who would learn the language – he himself had already set to work on this – and who would either come with their wives, so as to model good Christian families to the Sinkanders, or even better, who might commit to marry Sinkander women, so embedding themselves into kin networks, bringing whole families under good Protestant Christian norms, and demonstrating that this religion was not just for Europeans but for everyone. He also wanted the mission to be backed up with force. He hoped that the Dutch soldiers at the fort might arrest the indigenous priestesses to take them out of circulation. He also wanted troops to be put at Sinkan’s disposal in the endemic quarrels with the neighbouring villages. If he couldn’t match the miracles of the priestesses, he could certainly mobilise more firepower than they could.

The new governor had other plans. It turned out the Sinkanders had been trying to cut a trading deal with Japan independently, and he was determined to stop it. In January 1629, when Candidius was away from the village for a short time, the governor raided it, arresting sixteen villagers. The villagers were furious; so was Candidius, whose complaints about the governor were sufficiently persuasive that the Company decided to replace him. Just before the new man arrived, however, the real disaster struck. The soon-to-be-ousted governor sent another raid against another nearby village, Mattau, a long-term enemy of Sinkan, which he suspected of harbouring pirates. The Mattauwers ambushed them and killed the entire party of sixty Dutch soldiers. Exultant from their victory over Sinkan’s foreign protectors, Mattau proceeded to attack Sinkan itself, and overran it. As was apparently normal in inter-village warfare, there was not very much bloodshed, but a great deal of destruction: most of the village was burned to the ground.

This was the catastrophe that greeted the new governor, Hans Putmans. He swiftly decided that his key ally would be Candidius, the missionary. And Candidius’ advice was clear: as soon as possible, the Dutch must exact retribution on Mattau, both for their own security and to win back the support of Sinkan. But only when they were confident they could win. The first step was a small raid by combined Dutch and Sinkander forces against another, smaller village, giving the Sinkanders a share of the spoil; that was enough to get Candidius back into the village. He arrived in February 1630, to find that Sinkan was on the brink of starvation: and he spotted the opportunity. Governor Putmans supplied rice and cloth in generous quantities, without doing anything so crude as making these gifts conditional on conversion but being clear that to truly become friends of the Dutch would

mean becoming Christians. In 1631, the village took a collective decision to do just that. Fifty of them were baptised that year, and a house was built for Candidius. Meanwhile, the Dutch kept their side of the bargain. A further Dutch-supported raid against one of Sinkan's rivals in 1630 was successful: this rival had not injured the Dutch at all, and it was as one historian puts it 'nothing less than a headhunting expedition under the auspices of the [Dutch East India] Company', but that, it seemed, was what friends were for. Five heads were taken. It would, the colony's official register recorded, 'be very helpful in the work of the Lord and will also bind the Sinkanders to us more closely'.

The mission on Formosa seemed to be finding its feet. Crucially, Candidius was now joined by a second energetic Dutch minister, Robert Junius, who had been trained in the short-lived mission college in the Netherlands. The two of them, plus Governor Putmans, became a formidable team. The deal was that the Dutch would make allies, defend them, convert them and trade with them. The Company would get a growing sphere of control and rising profits. Their indigenous allies would get victory over their enemies, the benefits of trade and of education, and the saving truths of the Gospel. The missionaries would see the kingdom of God growing day by day. They threw themselves into holy wars. Junius led allied raiding parties on horseback: the Dutch and the Formosans did not quite trust each other, but the presence of the ministers, who could serve as a bridge between the two communities, made the alliance possible. Junius seems to have had no qualms about this role. He told Governor Putmans that he was praying to 'the Lord of Battles who must teach our hands to fight, so that Israel, God's own brethren, may emerge'. The ultimate target of these raids, naturally, was Mattau. It was six years before the massacre of 1629 could be revenged: the ministers repeatedly pressed the governor to act, fearing that Sinkan's loyalty and faith might prove wobbly. But when the Dutch were finally ready for retribution in 1635, the battle was decisive. They were now used to fighting alongside their Sinkander allies: the Dutch musketeers would fire a volley to disperse the enemy, and then the Formosans would charge with a view to collecting heads. It also helped that, as was all too common in these kinds of imperial encounters, a lethal wave of smallpox had just swept through Mattau. The village was burned and the Sinkanders took 26 heads, including women and children. The victory was the trigger for the whole of the south-western lowlands to submit to Dutch overlordship. By the end of the following year the Dutch sphere had expanded to include a further 57 villages.

The villages continued to administer their own affairs, but the Dutch imposed what one historian calls a *pax Hollandica*: the low-level inter-village violence which had been an endemic feature of pre-conquest life was stamped out. And they provided ministers, churches and schools. Wooden church buildings were thrown together in Sinkan and other villages, using musket-fire in place of bells to summon the people to worship, a pragmatic solution but also one which reminded everyone where Dutch power grew from. Starting in Sinkan, formal Reformed churches were set up, meaning that alongside the Dutch ministers there were elected Sinkander elders who were responsible for imposing discipline on the congregation. Candidius and Junius were already talking of a possible seminary on the island for training indigenous men for ordained ministry. In the meantime, however, the core of their project was schooling. The ambition was for a school in every village, providing free rice for all children who attended, boys and girls alike, to train them in literacy in their own language and in Dutch, and of course to instruct them in Christianity.

If all that sounds expensive, remember that one of the main aims of the colony was to provide deerskins for export to Japan. At the beginning of the Dutch settlement, they were exporting some 20,000 deerskins annually, but the number crept up as the Dutch zone became established. The decisive change came with the victories and pacification of 1635-6. The allied villages could and did provide skins for the Dutch, but not on a large enough scale. What accelerated the trade was the Dutch decision to licence mainland Chinese settlers to come to the island to hunt. By 1638, over 150,000 deerskins were being taken under this lucrative system. And in charge of the system of licensing was none other than the missionary and part-time head-hunter, Robert Junius. In that year, the licences produced a handsome revenue of just under 2000 *reals* for the Company. But the Company, despite its heavy investment in Formosa, only took half of that amount as profit. The rest

was ploughed back, with 624 *reals* being spent on food, clothes, equipment and teachers for schools, and smaller sums spent on poor relief and church-building. If the missionaries had made a devil's pact with the East India Company, they had at least driven a hard bargain. By the time Junius left the island in 1643, he and Candidius had between them baptised over six thousand people, admitted hundreds to communion and erected two fully self-governing churches.

But we should not be too starry-eyed about this *pax Hollandica*. For one thing, as you may have guessed, killing 150,000 deer per year on a not terribly large island was not even faintly sustainable. The deer population crashed catastrophically in the late 1630s and the Dutch were forced to impose strict limits on hunting. And there went the revenue stream; suddenly it became impossible to bribe children with rice to attend school, and the Dutch began trying to coerce them instead. Increased taxes were levied on the villages, despite Junius' protests. And colonial violence did not come to an end by any means. The case of the small offshore island of Lamey became notorious: its warlike inhabitants had massacred the first Dutch parties who attempted a landing, and in 1636 a Dutch force took the island after a brutal campaign in which the bulk of the population were besieged in and then smoked out of a cave where as many as three hundred died from starvation or asphyxiation. By the time the last islanders were captured in 1645, 405 islanders were reported killed and a further 697 enslaved. Junius was appalled by this, protesting vainly about the treatment of the captives and pleading for them to be returned home: he did eventually, years later, persuade the East India Company's governors in Amsterdam to accept that the policy had been too severe. But it was much too late, and anyway, did he really think that Dutch imperial power would always choose scrupulous and merciful self-restraint?

More consequentially, the Dutch sphere of control on Formosa itself was still quite small, and the influx of Chinese settlers into that newly pacified zone stirred up trouble, especially once the deer-hunting business dried up. It was not only that some Chinese settlers were challenging Dutch control and even preying on Dutch ships; even within the Dutch zone, Chinese agricultural encroachment on indigenous lands was causing friction, and the fact that taxing these Chinese settlers was now the colony's main source of revenue did not help. And fatally, their presence dragged the island into China's economic orbit for the first time. When civil war broke out in China after 1644, the Ming loyalist Zheng Chenggong, fighting a rearguard action from his base in Xiamen, right on the other side of the straits, began financing his struggle through maritime trade, and when the Dutch pushed back, he imposed an embargo on Formosa. During the 1650s the colony's trade, its revenue and its ability to finance its missionary projects all collapsed. By the time Zheng actually mounted an invasion of Formosa in 1661, he found a Chinese settler population eager and an indigenous population ready to welcome him. One admittedly disgruntled Dutch schoolteacher, who fled back to the Dutch fortress where they held out for several months before their final surrender, had this to say about the people amongst whom he had ministered:

"These fellows now speak with much disdain of the true Christian faith which we endeavoured to implant in their hearts, and are delighted that they are now freed from attending the schools. Everywhere they have destroyed the books and utensils, and have introduced the abominable usages and customs of heathenism. On hearing the report that Chenggong had arrived, they murdered one of our Dutch people; and after having struck off the head they danced around it with great joy and merriment, just as they formerly did with their vanquished enemies."

Perhaps conducting mission by means of headhunting was not such a good idea after all.

My third example builds on a story I was telling in the last lecture, of the joint Danish-German-English mission that was based at Tranquebar in south-east India from 1706 onwards, and which was unusually at arm's length from imperial power structures. By the later eighteenth century, as both the mission and the ambitions of European empires in India grew, that distance was becoming impossible to maintain. The person who found a new way forward – or who tried to – was the German missionary Christian Friedrich Schwarz, who arrived at Tranquebar in 1750. It quickly became clear that he was an unusually talented person, a formidably gifted linguist who settled on

a new missionary method of choosing and training local men to serve as submissioners – ‘helpers’, he called them – who would be sent out in pairs into the countryside, organising schools and congregations as they went. On at least one occasion he placed an Indian woman as leader of a congregation too. But this was also a period of surging imperial ambitions in India, and in particular of conflict between the British and the French. Schwarz was not a British subject, but the British were the Protestant power and the British SPCK were paying his salary. In the early 1760s he began cautiously to work with the British East India Company’s troops: it began when he established an orphan school for the survivors of a catastrophic explosion at an East India Company ammunition dump in 1761. By the time peace with France was established in 1763 Schwartz had become a kind of military chaplain to the East India Company, burying the dead and caring for the wounded. He refused to accept pay, insisting that the Company instead build prayer halls and schools. This arrangement was progressively formalised, to the point where he was formally re-ordained as an Anglican priest, a step which many good Lutherans would have regarded as an insult or a humiliation. Military chaplaincy meant collaboration with the British; but it also meant itinerancy, which he used to spread his network of so-called ‘helpers’ ever wider. It also put him at the heart of the ongoing struggle for India. During the war between the Company and the kingdom of Thanjavur in 1771-3, when ended in a gruelling siege, Schwarz made it his business to organise relief efforts, and his success in securing loans to buy grain was widely credited with having averted large-scale famine: it made his reputation in the region. So much so that when the king of Thanjavur was restored in 1776, under Company overlordship, he persuaded Schwarz to resign his military commission and move to Thanjavur as a royal advisor. Once again, Schwarz took his fee in the form of an endowment of lands for a new church in Thanjavur, which is still there, and the rebuilding of Christian schools and sites of worship that had suffered war damage. When the king died a decade later, Schwarz served as regent for his underage successor. This was partly because the East India Company trusted him, but he was increasingly plainly opposed to the Company’s rampant expansionism. During the late 1770s, he was involved in doomed attempts to negotiate a peace between the Company and the powerful south-eastern kingdom of Mysore, and when war broke out anyway, he used his network of ‘helpers’ to provide famine relief, and the sultan of Mysore ordered that they be protected.

If William Bedell was uncompromising and therefore ineffective; if George Candidius and Robert Junius were ready to compromise with imperial power and also therefore, in the end, not nearly as effective as they seemed; perhaps Christian Friedrich Schwarz offers a middle path. He worked with the burgeoning structures of imperial power – military chaplaincy is hardly a position for the squeamish – but because he had a clear sense of where to draw the line and where his ultimate loyalties lay, he was able to avoid being dragged in too deep. It certainly helped that he was German, not British, and that his primary identity and his core salary related to his work as a missionary: everything else was always a means to that end. But, certainly by the time he was working, there was no point in pretending that a missionary could avoid politics. The conquest of India was underway, and while he plainly disapproved of it, his response was to offer the remaining princely states the chance to build themselves into independent Christian or Christian-friendly kingdoms bolstered by the best modern education and able to live in prosperous peace alongside the British. Which was not exactly the deal that the British East India Company was interested in offering: when the Company provided subsidies for Schwarz’s schools in other territories, it was simply because his schools were producing the highly capable administrators that the Company was desperately short of.

In the end, empire was a tank that was going to grind forward regardless of what these missionaries did. Perhaps the choice between Bedell’s futile contrariness, Candidius and Junius’ compromised collaboration and Schwarz’s principled tightrope-walking is a false one: none of it made much difference in the end. Ireland, Taiwan and India all have vibrant Protestant minorities of different kinds, but none of them look like missionary success stories. And if in some cases the missionaries may have helped take the edge of the experience of conquest and occupation, in other ways all three of my examples were implicated in it.

But if that is a little bleak, it is also worth noting that by the end of Schwarz's life – he died in 1798 – something truly was beginning to change. In the first of these lectures, I said that the traditional starting-point of the history of Protestant missions, what I've been using as my end-point, was William Carey's *Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, published in 1792, a few months before he founded the body which became known as the Baptist Missionary Society in Northamptonshire. The following year, Carey set sail for, of course, India, where he lived and worked for the remaining forty years of his life. His example was also critical in the creation of the London Missionary Society, an interdenominational outfit led by Congregationalists and Presbyterians, in 1795, which made its first rather ill-fated venture to Tahiti. But these are the first of what became a surge of formal Protestant missionary societies from then on, with the British in the lead but not alone – the Swiss-based Basel Missionary Society established in 1815 was amongst the most famous early leaders. So, we need to finish by asking: why, given the slow, very halting and generally pretty unsuccessful Protestant missionary story that we have tracked over the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was a corner quite suddenly turned from the 1790s onwards? If working with imperial powers was so difficult, how could the heyday of European imperial power prove to be so much more conducive to Protestant missions?

Now that is a big, complicated question, and historians are supposed to like giving big, complicated questions big, complicated answers: so I will do my best. But the evening is drawing to a close and I am afraid I actually think that underlying it all is one simple reason, one event without which it would not have happened. Still, lest I look too simplistic, let's creep up on that event from behind and see if we can make it look a little more sophisticated than that first. So, let's notice that the vanguard of this new missionary surge was British Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians, all of them nonconformist, dissenting churches at one remove from the British establishment – indeed, still suffering legal discrimination of various kinds in Britain at that date; and if the Basel Mission Society was representing established churches, the Swiss Confederation and the Kingdom of Württemberg were hardly imperial powers. Like Schwarz and the Tranquebar missionaries, these missionaries were not directly employed by or beholden to imperial power structures. That was a contrast to the English Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, which in the end was always more interested in building up Anglicanism than in preaching to the so-called heathen; and it was a contrast to the Dutch Reformed ministers who were employed, and kept on a tight leash by, the Dutch East and West India Companies. In fact, I would suggest that a significant piece of the puzzle is the takeover of a large part of the Dutch empire by the British during the Napoleonic wars: in particular the island of Ceylon / Sri Lanka, and the Dutch colony at the Cape of Good Hope, where British rule saw an almost immediate cross-denominational influx of missionaries, who would make South Africa into the continent's missionary springboard. Indeed, the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars not only delivered the Dutch empire into British hands, but also spurred a wider sense amongst the British, deeply shocked by the so-called dechristianisation campaign in Revolutionary France, that their struggle with the Jacobins and with Napoleon was a war for Christian civilisation. So perhaps what reset the dial is the French Revolution of 1789, certainly an epoch-making event. But I think we need to go back a little further. The change in atmosphere in Britain was already apparent by the late 1780s. Indeed, a crucial element to it was a collective realisation which gripped much of the pious element of British society from around 1783 onwards. The London Missionary Society and William Carey himself were deeply connected to a slightly earlier movement, perhaps the first truly mass-participation political campaign in British history, one which related to the non-Christian population which British subjects encountered much more frequently than any other: that is, enslaved Africans. The missionary awakening of the 1790s is a kind of outgrowth of the campaign to abolish the slave trade which sprang up with astonishing speed in the 1780s, such that it moved from being an extreme view held by a few eccentrics in 1783 to, within a decade, having a petition against the trade signed by over 10% of Britain's entire population and the House of Commons passing an abolition bill by 230 to 85. The newly crystallised conviction that the slave trade was an intolerable obstacle to converting Africans both in the Americas and in Africa itself was a vital part of this mass movement. But what was it that suddenly, from 1783 onwards, made it possible for Britain to consider openly confronting the colonial slave-holding

interests that it had never dared defy before? Indeed, what national catastrophe also made Britain ready to question whether its deepening role in the slave trade was a collective sin for which the nation was being judged? What event simultaneously and abruptly brought to a halt the main efforts of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the Anglican missionary outfit whose attempts to build up the Church of England in North America had absorbed so much of England's missionary energies? And what event, incidentally, pushed France to the edge of bankruptcy, so helping to trigger the French Revolution itself?

In other words: I suggest that the simple reason why the missionary awakening took place was the American Revolution. It is not only that American independence made British slave-trade abolitionism possible, since Britain's proslavery constituency was now reduced to some Caribbean islands which the mother country was not particularly afraid to provoke; or indeed that American independence made abolition feel necessary, since freed slaves had fought bravely for the loyalist cause in the American war and the almost inconceivable defeat felt like a thunderbolt of judgement. The American revolution completely reshaped Britain's overseas empire: indeed, it's often described as the end of the first British empire, the Atlantic empire, and the beginning of a pivot to the second, the Indian Ocean empire, with spreading control of India, the seizure of the Cape of Good Hope and of Ceylon to follow, and the first beginnings of Australian colonisation to boot. When the SPG was established in the 1701, America was the priority, and it poured its efforts into building up the Church of England against other Christian denominations there, with some intermittent attempts to minister to enslaved people and to small numbers of Native Americans. Meanwhile India was a sideshow, left to the SPG's poorer and more informal cousin the SPCK, which funded the Tranquebar mission. After the American Revolution, it suddenly became clear that India was no longer the sideshow, but the main attraction: if William Carey had had his missionary awakening a quarter-century earlier, he would certainly have gone to the North American frontier, not to Calcutta. So let me be clear: in suggesting that the fountainhead of the modern missionary movement was the American Revolution, I am in no sense ascribing it to that revolution's principles, republican self-government, the seeds of democracy, a house divided between slavery and freedom on a continent whose indigenous peoples were driven to the margins. The United States' missionary energies would be focused on itself for generations to come. But the loss of the American colonies transformed how Britain, and in its wake Protestant Europe, saw the wider world: its sins, its obligations, its opportunities. And I hope that, after the stories I have told you today about how tangled, co-dependent and even mutually destructive the relationship between mission and empire could be, it will seem credible that the foundation of British and then global Protestant missionary success lay in the British Empire's most humiliating defeat.

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