

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
1.1 DEFINITION OF THE QUESTION INVESTIGATED.....	3
1.2 DEFINITION OF THE TERM ‘MISSIONARY AWAKENING’	4
1.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE WORK	5
1.4 MY METHOD	6
2. THE PROTESTANT BACKGROUND.....	7
2.1 THE VACUUM OF PROTESTANT MISSION BEFORE THE 18 TH CENTURY	7
2.1.1 <i>Inward reasons</i>	7
2.1.2 <i>Outward reasons</i>	10
2.2 THE MORAVIANS	11
3. THE MISSIONARY EXPLOSION – WHAT LAUNCHED IT?.....	14
3.1 THE EXPLOSION – WHAT DID IT LOOK LIKE?	14
3.1.1 <i>The great contrast</i>	14
3.1.2 <i>The nature of the missionary explosion</i>	15
3.1.3 <i>The birth of missionary societies</i>	15
3.2 WHAT LAUNCHED IT?	18
3.2.1 <i>Spiritual awakenings</i>	18
3.2.2 <i>Methodist awakenings in England</i>	19
3.2.3 <i>The Great Awakenings in North America</i>	21
3.2.4 <i>Jonathan Edwards</i>	21
3.2.5 <i>Conclusion on Spiritual revivals</i>	26
3.3 THE ENLIGHTENMENT AS A FACTOR BEHIND THE MISSIONARY AWAKENING.....	26
3.3.1 <i>A definition of the term ‘the Enlightenment’</i>	27
3.3.2 <i>The Enlightenment and Protestantism</i>	28
3.3.3 <i>The Enlightenment and mission</i>	29
3.3.4 <i>Conclusion on the Enlightenment</i>	34
3.4 OTHER ASPECTS OF THE TIME.....	35
3.4.1 <i>A romantic spirit</i>	35
3.4.2 <i>The political situation in Europe</i>	36

4. MOTIVES FOR MISSION AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PROTESTANT MISSIONARY MOVEMENT	39
4.1 INTRODUCTION	39
4.2 THE MOTIVE OF LOVE AND COMPASSION.....	39
4.3 THE ESCHATOLOGICAL MOTIVE	40
4.4 THE GREAT COMMISSION	41
4.5 CONCLUSION ON THE DIFFERENT MOTIVES	42
5. WILLIAM CAREY	43
5.1 CAREY’S BACKGROUND.....	43
5.2 THE FORMATION OF A SOCIETY	44
5.3 AN ENQUIRY.....	45
5.4 CAREY – THE MISSIONARY.....	48
5.4.1. <i>The Serampore trio</i>	49
5.5 WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM WILLIAM CAREY	50
6. CONCLUSION.....	52
6.1 WHAT LAUNCHED THE MISSIONARY AWAKENING?	52
6.2 WHAT CAN OUR TIME LEARN FROM ALL THIS?.....	53
6.3 WHAT I HAVE LEARNED – A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE	56
BIBLIOGRAPHY	57

1. INTRODUCTION

Right in the beginning I have to confess it; I love to read mission history. While reading, I have come to understand that something happened by the time of William Carey, something that would come to effect the whole world. It seemed to me like an explosion of mission. Then the question has kept on coming back to my mind: Why did the 19th century explode with mission?

Now you can understand that the question of this work is very personal. It is asked in pure curiosity. Another dimension that always has struck me is the devotion of those missionaries. They risked their lives, wives, children and reputation, and my question has been a simple “Why did they go?”

If I am able to find the answer to this question much has been gained. But the most exciting thing of all, I might be able to compare their way of thinking of and doing mission with ours. And who knows, I might be able to learn something from history. Again.

1.1 Definition of the question investigated

What do I mean by the question “What made them go?” My intention is to somehow get to know the motive power and the “spirit” behind the Protestant missionary awakening, and to see the factors that made this explosion of mission possible. I want to investigate the force behind it as a whole, not so much specific motives that made individuals enter mission. I am asking the question “what made them go?” from several different perspectives, with the intention of grasping some of the spiritual, theological, cultural and sociological circumstances that played a part in launching the missionary explosion. It is of course impossible to grasp all the factors, hopefully I can focus on the most important.

Although I focus on the movement as a whole, It must be said that there is an interaction between communal motives and motives found in individuals. Johannes van den Berg writes:

Without the work of “awakened” individuals the missionary awakening at the end of the eighteenth century is simply unthinkable, while on the other hand the individual’s decision was determined by the attitude of the group to which they belonged.¹

It would have been fascinating to be able to interview grass-root missionaries of that time, and ask them why they went. The problem is, beside that it is impossible, that I would end up with as many motives as there were missionaries. And for many of them, the motives remained implicit and unexpressed. Motives can be difficult to investigate by that reason, there are so many psychological factors which play a part. Hence, the individual, psychological level of the question will not be dealt with here.

Still the missionary explosion is very real, and I do think it is possible to try to understand why it appeared when it appeared. I will try to cover both external factors, such as political and practical circumstances, and internal factors such as theological, spiritual and philosophical circumstances by that time. The focus will be on the latter circumstances.

Of course I believe there is a force which may not let itself be investigated in the same way. That is the force of the Holy Spirit. My view is that this dimension is of great importance. God’s Spirit works alongside, together with and often stirs human motives and intentions. I think many of the missionaries of that time would say their ‘amen’ if I quote a word from the Scripture:

All a man’s ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the Lord.

And:

In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.²

1.2 Definition of the term ‘Missionary awakening’

We will later see what exactly happened during the last years of 18th century and the beginning of 19th in certain Protestant circles, which we call the Great missionary explosion. As a brief, and of course simplified, definition I would like to describe it as follows:

¹ Van den Berg (1956:3)

² Proverbs 16:2, 9 (NIV Bible)

William Carey published his *Enquiry* in 1792 and it led to the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society the same year. What followed must literally be called an explosion of missionary societies formed in England, Scotland, the European continent and North America. What was new was the focus on bringing the Gospel to the heathens. Evangelisation had been very much on the agenda since the spiritual awakenings with the Methodist movement in England and the Great Awakenings in North America. What “exploded” now was the awareness, willingness and strategy to go overseas and bring the Gospel to non-Christian people who never had heard it before. This was the time of ‘*extra ecclesium*’ missionary societies, but also a new awareness of the missionary task within the Protestant churches, and many writings published which tried to stimulate the missionary interest. And most important of all, this was the time when people actually went abroad.

I will use different terms, such as “Missionary awakening” or “Missionary explosion”, but they are all referring to the beginning of the modern Protestant missionary era, covering the years from 1792 up til the first twenty years of the 19th century.

1.3 Limitations of the work

The time investigated is the first 30 years of this movement. My focus will be on the question why the pioneers went, not so much the generations after. But I will of course take in a longer historical perspective to try to capture factors behind this explosion. The 18th century is therefore very much in focus in this work, what happened then answers many of my questions. I will also include the Reformers view on mission, just to get to know the theological background, which is very important to understand.

My focus will be on missionaries from the English-speaking world, as most of the material I have covered is written from that perspective. It should also be said that in the beginning of the Protestant missionary era, the English-speaking world played an important role.³ Thus, I will concentrate on North America and Britain.

³ (Bosch 1991:285)

I will stick to Protestant mission only, without comparing it to Catholic mission, which has another history, and although it is important, it does not follow the pattern I want to investigate here. The question of whether or not the Protestant missionary awakening took any influence, even the smallest, from Catholic mission thought and practise, will not be dealt with here.

1.4 My method

You can approach this question from many angles. The road I have chosen to follow in this work has two 'wheeltracks':

1. By looking at theological and spiritual influences on the formations of the missionary awakening.
2. By trying to take in secular factors such as looking at influences from the Enlightenment and the changes it brought to the way people thought and did by this time.

The first wheeltrack is the easiest. Finding books and articles on this is not hard at a college like All Nations. The second was more of a challenge as I struggled to find written works about the connection between mission and the Enlightenment. Whether or not this was a correct road to follow I leave to the reader to decide.

2. THE PROTESTANT BACKGROUND

In this section I want to depict the background in Protestant Europe the centuries before the missionary explosion. I want to briefly investigate how much, or little, of Protestant mission existed before the end of 18th century. I will also take a look at one big exception, the Moravians.

2.1 The vacuum of Protestant mission before the 18th century

The time of Reformation and the two following centuries have often been described as a vacuum when it comes to mission strategy, theology and efforts done by others than a few individuals. My intention is to try to find out why. I will focus on two dimensions:

- Inward reasons - the Reformers' world of thought
- Outward reasons – the practical and political situation

2.1.1 Inward reasons

Scholars mostly depict the Reformers as being indifferent, or even hostile, towards mission.⁴ Is that the case? If we apply our modern understanding of mission, marked by centuries of Protestant mission, the answer surely has to be yes. Today we tend to define mission as a human enterprise in carrying the Gospel to the ends of the world. We will not find a similar concept among Luther, Calvin or other Reformer theologians. It is not there, it is a vacuum. Van den Berg writes:

The works of the Reformers contain no doctrine of missions, not even fragments of such a doctrine – and this omission does not have the same background as it has in the New Testament, where the self-evidency of the missionary vocation is continuously supposed. There a fullness – here a vacuum.⁵

⁴ Gustav Warneck, often referred to as being the founder of mission theology, saw nothing of interest in the idea of mission among the Reformers. This view has though been challenged by later scholars, e.g. by Walter Holsten, who gives the Reformation more value for the work of mission. (Van den Berg, J. Calvin and Missions in *John Calvin: Contemporary Prophet* (Hoogstra (ed) 1959:167)

⁵ Van den Berg (1956:6)

So it seems that if we look for our modern mission understanding among Luther and Calvin, we will get dissatisfied. They simply did not write about it.

Having said that, we should also admit that there are other ways of understanding the Reformers' mission thinking. If we try to see their understanding of mission within their own theology, within the context of the Reformation, we might get a slightly different picture. How can we understand them then?

First of all, the Reformers' theology has its starting point not in what people could or should do for the salvation of the world, but in what God has already done in Christ.⁶ They do not start off with human activity, but God's work in Christ and us. As a reaction against Rome, and in fear of the anthropocentric elements they saw in Roman Catholic missionary activity, they wanted to emphasize God's role in salvation. God does the work!

Luther sums up his teaching of God's role in salvation by using the famous metaphor of a stone thrown into water:

It produces circular waves which move out from the centre in successive progression; in the same way the Word of God moves into the world, beginning from Jerusalem and on to the ends of the earth, and in this process, as Luther says emphatically, it is not dependent on human efforts. The mission is God's and not ours.⁷

This shows us that there is a place for the concept of mission within the Reformers' thinking, and Luther did have in mind the whole world when he thought of the spreading of the Gospel. But once again, in Luther's thought the focus was on God, not on us. Therefore, even if we find aspects of mission within Luther's theology, we cannot apply our modern understanding of mission, as an enterprise undertaken by humans on God's command. As a Reformer of the Church of the 1600th century he simply did not think of mission as we do.

Another interesting aspect on Luther is that he did not see the Great Commission as binding to the Church of his time. His view was that it had been given to the New Testament apostles as they spread the Gospel, and therefore it was fulfilled by them.

⁶ Bosh (1991:244)

⁷ Gensichen (1960:122)

After the apostles, no one has any longer such an universal apostolic command. This view was not only Luther's, it would be the common way of thinking among the Reformers for a long time. Jonathan Edwards would 200 years later challenge this view, as would William Carey later on.

Turning to Calvin, his teaching did not differ much on this issue compared to Luther. Generally speaking, we do not find much of mission theology in his works, and that is for the same reason as for Luther. Having said that, we must admit also here that there are elements in his theology that point to some interest for the cause of missions. Calvin took, in contrast to Luther, the Christian's responsibility in the transforming of the world more seriously. Van den Berg writes about Calvin's vision:

Calvin recognizes the universal character of the gospel call, he looks forward to the coming of a universal church, gathered from all the quarters of the earth and to the establishment of the reign of God all over this wide world, and he knows that the church has to play an active part in the great work of making this world a theatre of God's glory.⁸

Within Calvinist theology we find the doctrine of *predestination*, i.e. God has from the beginning elected those whom will have salvation, and the number of saved souls stands firm, unknown and unchanged by human effort. We have to confirm that this doctrine is to blame for the lack of mission interest within Reformation theology. But this might be more true when speaking about later Calvinism than Calvin himself. Van den Berg says that the later Calvinists based their hostile attitude towards mission on a misunderstanding of this doctrine. They put human effort in opposition against God's sovereignty. A famous quotation of a "hyper-Calvinist" we have from an older Baptist minister, saying to William Carey:

Young man sit down, sit down. You are an enthusiast. When God pleases to convert the heathen, he'll do it without consulting you and me.⁹

Calvin would probably have said something slightly different. He did not see that God's will militates against human responsibility. One of his own comments on the mystery of predestination was:

⁸ Van den Berg, J. Calvin and Missions in *John Calvin: Contemporary Prophet* (Hoogstra (ed) 1959:170)

⁹ Van den Berg, J. Calvin and Missions in *John Calvin: Contemporary Prophet* (Hoogstra (ed) 1959:175)

Because the number of the elect is unknown to us our attitude has to be destined by the desire that all may be saved.¹⁰

On one hand, this statement might support the idea of mission. On the other hand, it does not in any way command us take active part in saving souls. We might say that it opens a door to mission, but it does not give us the reason to enter it.

To conclude: Luther did not have a theology of mission, nor did Calvin. The same is with other Reformers like John Knox, Bucer and Melanchthon.¹¹ There is a place for the idea of the Gospel reaching the ends of the earth, but it lays in the hands of the Lord to fulfill in his own time. At the end of the day we have to face the facts; extremely little of Protestant missionary effort happened during the first two centuries after the Reformation. This can of course be explained by the Reformers' teaching, but we must also understand this missionary vacuum in light of the many practical obstacles, which we will turn to now.

2.1.2 Outward reasons

Besides the world of thought of the Reformers themselves, there are many practical explanations why this period lacks missionary efforts from the Protestant Europe. Some would probably suggest that these outward factors explain the lack of missionary efforts even better than the theological teaching of the Reformers. Those obstacles were of such significance, that we can question if Luther and Calvin and their followers would have been able to undertake any mission work even if they would have wished to. Bosch lists those factors,¹² and I will here pick out the most important ones:

- Protestants saw as their primary task to reform the church of that time; this consumed all their energy.
- Protestants had no direct contact with non-Christian peoples. All the doors to the world outside Europe were controlled by the big colonial empires, Spain and

¹⁰ Van den Berg, J. Calvin and Missions in *John Calvin: Contemporary Prophet* (Hoogstra (ed) 1959:170)

¹¹ Anderson (1961:98)

¹² Bosch (1991:245)

Portugal, both Catholic nations. They had their own mission, and Protestants had no simple way to reach their colonies, even if they had wished to do so.

- In the beginning of the Reformation, the churches were fighting battles just to survive, and it was not until the Peace of Westphalia 1648 that they could establish and organize themselves properly.
- There were also internal strife and disputation within the Protestant churches, and this of course left little or no energy to consider people outside the Christian area.

These outward factors, together with the theological teaching, help us to understand the vacuum of mission during the time of Reformation. This mission-silence lasted for almost two and a half centuries. Even if there were individual attempts to establish mission work overseas, no such effort was launched by a group, church or society as a whole. There are though a few exceptions to this. The most important exception was the Moravian mission.

2.2 The Moravians

From 1732 and forward the Moravians sent missionaries to 28 different countries.¹³ By 1792, 300 missionaries had been sent to the ends of the world by the small Moravian community.¹⁴ These facts speak for themselves. Before William Carey wrote his *Enquiry*, before all the missionary societies of the 19th century were brought to life, a few people in a small community spent all their energy to make Jesus Christ, the lamb of God, known to the whole world. The devotion for mission within the Moravian community is significant. Mission was the very reason of its being.¹⁵ Who were they?

The Moravian Community was formed in the 1720s by a group Protestants who had sought shelter to escape persecution, on the estate belonging to the noble Ludvig von Zinzendorf, in Herrnhut, Germany. Out of this, the Moravian Community was founded in 1727.

¹³ Christian History Issue 36 (Vol. XI, No. 4) pp. 20

¹⁴ Christian History, Inaugural Issue, (Vol 1. No. 1.) pp. 18

¹⁵ Van der Linde (1978:91)

The Moravian church derived from Pietistic tradition, and developed in its own, special way. The focus on Christ as the lamb of God was significant, also the adoration of Christ's suffering, his blood and wounds. We might question some bits of this 'blood-adoration', especially when we hear phrases like this one, written in a circular letter to Moravian churches:

Like a poor little worm, I desire to withdraw myself into his [Christ's] wounds.¹⁶

Even if we hesitate when hearing this, we can be convinced that this emphasis served as motivation for sacrificial and heroic missionary service of the early Moravians.

The Moravians were tremendously devoted to prayer. Everthing they did was born out of prayer. Well known is the 24h/day prayer watch which started off in 1727 and continued over 100 years. No doubt this spirit of prayer helped to sustain the fire of evangelism within the community.

The Moravians saw the whole world as their mission field. Listen to what Zinzendorf writes in his work *The Foundation of Our Mission to the Heathen*:

Preach the gospel to all creatures, all nations...no nation excepted, no people has preference here, no place in which they were born, not their language nor sex.¹⁷

The Moravian missionaries had the courage to go to areas were they were quite unpopular. They opposed slavery and founded churches among the slaves, calling them their brothers and sisters. Following the regulations of Zinzendorf, they tried to adjust their approach in ways which could be accepted and understood by the people they worked among. Zinzendorf also focused the individual in evangelisation. He encouraged the missionaries to preach the gospel to the individuals in whom it was obvious that the Holy Spirit already was at work. We can recognise the same attitude found among many mission organisations today such as when speaking of the importance of missionaries adapting to a culture, one-to-one evangelisation and so on. This makes the mission strategy of the Moravians modern in a sense.

The Moravian started something that was to be continued by Carey and others when the great explosion came. The links between Moravian mission zeal and the

¹⁶ Tucker (1983:73)

¹⁷ Davies (1995:33)

awakening of Protestant mission from 1792 onwards are obvious. As a matter of fact, I could easily have placed the section about the Moravians in the next chapter. Carey, and others, saw the Moravian church as an important source of inspiration, and Carey refers to the Moravian example in his *Enquiry*. Therefore they were not only an exception of the lack of Protestant mission, they played a part in awakening of missionary interest in Protestant circles all over the Western world. This leads us straight into next step in our research, the Great Missionary Awakening.

3. THE MISSIONARY EXPLOSION – WHAT LAUNCHED IT?

3.1 The Explosion – what did it look like?

Before I go on with my investigation of the question what launched it, let us take a closer look on this ‘explosion’. As a beginning, let us put 250 years against 25 years. What we will see is a great contrast...

3.1.1 The great contrast

From the formation of the Protestant Church until the end of the 18th century, nothing of mission strategy, theology or effort came from Protestant Christian circles. The only exception from this was, as we have seen, the Moravians, in the middle of the 17th century, and at the same time the beginning of mission work among the Indians in North America, as we also have seen. Having those 250 years of Protestant missionary vacuum in mind, let us look at the following statistics:

1792 Baptist Missionary Society

1795 London Missionary Society

1796 Edinburgh Missionary Society

1796 Glasgow Missionary Society

1797 Netherlands Missionary Society

1799 Church Missionary Society

1799 Religious Tract Society

1804 British & Foreign Bible Society

1809 Society for Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews

1810 American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions

1813-18 Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society

1814 American Baptist Missionary Union

1815 Basel Evangelical Missionary Society

1816 American Bible Society

And on we could go...

What is this, if not a complete explosion of organized missionary work?!

3.1.2 The nature of the missionary explosion

What are the significant things with the missionary movement compared to earlier evangelistic zeal found in the Protestant Church? Here are a few things:

- *The focus is on the heathens.* Almost all effort up til Carey had been towards people within the reach of the church. Even the missionaries among the Indians did not have to go very far. What was new from Carey and onwards was the complete focus on “the heathens”. The missionaries of this time went to people they had never seen, who spoke languages they had never heard and lived in cultures totally different from their own. Their aim was to bring the Gospel to the ends of the earth.
- *They organized themselves.* As we have seen from the list above, a significant thing of this time was the formations of missionary societies. Within a few years societies existed all over Great Britain, North America and in many countries in Europe.
- *They had an ecumenical approach.* The missionary societies had a strong interdenominational approach. People organized themselves around their call to missions, not around doctrines.
- *They were devoted.* They went with great confidence and passion. Much of their willingness to go came from a deep assurance of the victory of the Gospel over other beliefs. This was the time of Christianity reaching the all the nations of the earth.

3.1.3 The birth of missionary societies

It is interesting to see how these missionary societies came to life. Let me do a brief, general overview of the formation of some of the most important societies. We will see that they were very much influenced by each other. But even more striking is the fact that these movements started on different places, ran parallel to each other, and all this at the same time. There was indeed an explosion, but maybe we come even closer to the truth by describing it as series of small ‘bangs’ in many different places.

Carey, together with people like Hogg, Fuller, Ryland and Sutcliff, founded the Baptist Missionary Society in October, 1792.¹⁸ Carey was of course important in the formation of this society, but he was not alone. He had to meet the right people, which he did. They were mission-minded but needed someone like Carey to really take off. Carey's contribution was the world-wide outlook which transformed the latent mission ideal into a burning passion,¹⁹ and the B.M.S. was born.

At the same time, the first embryo of a Methodist missionary society took form, thanks to Thomas Coke, but it would become a structured organisation first 1813-18.

In September 1795 the London Missionary Society was founded. It was initiated by people like Thomas Haweis and others who had read the *Letters on Missions*, written by M. Horne.²⁰ L.M.S. also has roots back in a prayer-call of the Northampton Baptist ministers, inspired by Edwards' *Humble Attempt*. The results of this prayer-call were: Monthly prayer meetings, forming of a fund and the issuing of circular letters. L.M.S. was from the beginning designed as an interdenominational organization. Unite churchmen and dissenters, Calvinists and Armanians, Baptists and paedobaptists, all did they come together for the sake of missions.

The Anglican church would also make its contribution. The Church Mission Society was founded 1799 after the question was raised by John Venn, Rector of Clapham:

What methods can we use more effectually to promote the knowledge of the Gospel among the Heathen?²¹

In Scotland the same missionary awakening took place. In February 1796 the Glasgow Missionary Society was founded and the same year Scottish Missionary Society. This was followed by a large number of local missionary societies throughout Scotland, which most of them initially sent their contributions to the L.M.S. in London.²²

It was not only in Britain things happened. In North America societies for the evangelisation of the Indians were formed 1796 onwards, and together with the

¹⁸ To get the background of the formation of B.M.S., see chapter 5 in this work.

¹⁹ Van den Berg (1956:127)

²⁰ Horne was an Anglican clergyman who had served as a chaplain in Sierra Leone. His *Letters on Missions* contains an appeal to give support to the sake of missions. (Van den Berg 1956:128)

²¹ Stanley (1990:57)

²² Stanley (1990:57)

Evangelical awakening (Second Great Awakening) in North America the Protestant churches woke up with one thing on the agenda; the gospel to the heathens. 1810 the first society exclusively committed to overseas mission was established; The American Board of commissioners for Foreign Missions, and it would not be the last.

On the continent of Europe things happened a bit later. This was of course due to a more unstable political situation than in Britain and North America. Some of the first societies were the Basel Mission 1815 and Berlin Society 1824.

Of course we can see that the founding of one society influenced people to start the same at another place, and there was mutual interrelation through personal contacts and written documents. Does it mean that the missionary awakening was fire lit by Carey only, and then spreading to North America and to the European continent? Not necessarily. Van den Berg sees the development in America as a movement running parallel to that in Great Britain.²³ And when looking at the development in Europe Van den Berg says:

We must rather speak of a simultaneity, which is a striking sign of the fact that the time had become ripe everywhere for a new development in the history of missions.²⁴

A new era was born, the Great missionary era, with fires burning in all these different places at the same time!

Having said that, it is also interesting to see that the various societies were interdependent and integrally related to each other. Let us conclude by using Van den Berg's word:

There was a variety, indeed; but underlying this variety there was a deeper unity which makes it possible to see the various branches of British missionary life in this period as branches of one great movement.²⁵

²³ Van den Berg (1956:123)

²⁴ Van den Berg (1956:126)

²⁵ Van den Berg (1956:126)

3.2 *What launched it?*

After this quick survey, the question arises, what was the motive power behind all this? What launched this great enterprise? Now we have come to the very question which lies behind this research paper. How can we explain the big explosion of mission from 1792 onwards?

To answer this question we have to look into many different aspects. There is no single answer, but many. As I said, the focus in this work will be on two dimensions:

- Spiritual awakenings in Europe and North America
- The influence from the Enlightenment and other aspects of that time.

3.2.1 Spiritual awakenings

The 18th century is known for its evangelical revivals in England, Scotland and North America. To say that without them the Protestant missionary movement would never had appeared is not an exaggeration. So many lives were transformed, so many prayers prayed, so many hearts were set on fire for God, and so many life-changing books were written. All this became the foundation for what later would come, the Great missionary explosion. When you read about the revivals, you understand how important they were for what would become the missionary movement. And you understand this; it is difficult to distinguish one movement from another, they are very much intertwined and the links are many and complex. One thing is for sure: All of the Protestant missionaries who went during the time this investigation is concerned, were in some way touched by the ongoing revivals. What we therefore can say is: Much of the zeal for mission which appeared 1792 and onwards is best understood in the light of these revivals. The missionary movement was born out of it!

I must limit myself when writing on this. If I wanted to investigate all the revivals known under the name ‘awakenings’ in England and North America, I would end up trying to cover 150 years and more, which would be irrelevant here. Hence, what I am interested of bringing up here is the most important movements

before 1800, and try to see how they are related to the missionary awakening. The things I will mention are:

- The Methodist awakening in Britain
- The Great awakenings in North America
- Jonathan Edwards

3.2.2 Methodist awakenings in England

The Methodist movement, founded by John and Charles Wesley in the middle of the 18th century, played an important role in the awakening of the missionary explosion. The revival movements were all marked by a strong evangelistic devotion, and this was very much the sign of the Methodists. Wesley, Whitefield and others turned their hearts, minds and hands to the “unchurched” people from the lower classes in England, Wales and Ireland. They approached people with what we nowadays would call a ‘holistic gospel’, challenging them to change their lives and open their hearts to God. Their message was in short: A *real* surrender of the heart and life *to* Christ would lead to a *real* assurance of the grace and forgiveness given by God *in* Christ. This leads directly to a revival of a person’s fellowship with God and a zeal of passionate evangelism.

The Methodist founders practised what they preached, and they practised and preached a lot! They went to prisons to preach, they visited sick people in hospitals, they founded orphanages, day schools for street children and much more. This shows us that the revivals were more than an emotional thing, they stirred people to act on God’s behalf, outside the church. They carried a zeal for peoples’ wellbeing, spiritual as well as physical and emotional. This can be seen as an important spark, among many others, which lit the fire of missions.

It should be said that the period of Methodism did not distinguish between home and foreign mission,²⁶ as it was to become with the missionary awakening. The Methodists saw all the spiritual, social and physical needs in their own neighbourhood, and their answer to it became an amazing evangelistic zeal.

²⁶ Van den Berg (1956:84)

John Wesley saw the “lost sheep of the church of England” as his primary concern. But he had his focus not just on England. One famous statement of Wesley is: “The world is my parish”, and he probably had the New World, America, in mind. Wesley went to Georgia in 1736, and one of the purposes with the journey was to work among the Indians.²⁷ Those plans did not work out as he first intended, but it shows an awareness of the sake of the Gospel among other parts of the world. It seems though that Wesley’s passion for his own people, within the reach of the church, was stronger. He carried the whole world in his mind, but his heart was in the “unchurched” England. Van den Berg explains this fact by saying as follows;

Wesley and many of his followers thought that the “times of the heathen” had not yet come in its fullness, and therefore the doors were still partly closed for such an enterprise.²⁸

Wesley’s concern was for the awakening of Christianity, primarily. When the Church had woken up and taken its mission seriously, then the time had come for all people to be reached by the Gospel, thought Wesley. So we find in Wesley a heart burning for the sake of spreading the Gospel in the whole world, but the Church of England would have the largest part of his heart.

Another Methodist leader by the same time of Wesley would become more known as the person behind Methodist missions. His name was Thomas Coke, and he was Wesley’s assistant. As early as 1783 he published his *Plan of the Society for the Establishment of Missions among the Heathens*. As he did not get much of active support from Wesley, he had to work by himself in raising financial support to send out missionaries. But it was possible, in 1787 Coke planted the first Methodist missionaries in the West Indies.²⁹ Though, it would take more than a decade of the 19th century before a structured Methodist missionary society took form.

Another famous man rooted in the Methodist revival in England is George Whitefield. He is best known as a great preacher, he was the first evangelist to travel and preach to large crowds outdoors in fields and town squares. Whitefield’s attitude towards foreign mission was quite similar to Wesley’s. His most important

²⁷ Van den Berg (1956:88)

²⁸ Van den Berg (1956:90)

²⁹ Stanley (1990:56)

contribution would become in the work of revival of the Church in England, let alone North America, to which we turn now.

3.2.3 The Great Awakenings in North America

It is not hard to find links to the Missionary explosion 1792 onwards to the revivals in North America known as the Great awakenings. While in England it seems that the revivals during 18th century continued into the 19th century without a real stop, the situation was a bit different in North America. The first Great awakening with Edwards and Whitefield appeared in 1740s and then the movement had a standstill, during the war of independence. But from 1790 revivals spread throughout New England which we call the Second Great awakening. There are many great events to tell about, many famous or anonymous preachers used by God to revive the church of that time. The Second Great Awakening in North America, and Britain as well, was the producer of the Missionary awakening. The main source behind this was the prayercall of Jonathan Edwards, and the many prayer meetings which came to be as a respond to this call. We will therefore concentrate on him now.

3.2.4 Jonathan Edwards

If we call William Carey “the father of modern missions”, it is fair to give Jonathan Edwards the title “grandfather of modern missions”³⁰. Such an important role was he to play, long after his death. He was the preacher of the first Great awakening in 1740s, but his writings would become more influential on the second Great awakening some decades after his death. In Edwards we see an important source of inspiration behind the missionary awakening on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

³⁰ This is the title R.E. Davies gives Edwards in his article “Jonathan Edwards: Missionary Biographer, Theologian, Strategist, Administrator, Advocate – and Missionary” in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 21, No. 2, April 1997. Davies points out how much the writings of Edwards influenced the people who stood behind the Great Missionary awakening.

Jonathan Edwards was born 1703 in East Windsor, CT. Early in life he proved to be an intelligent young boy, and entered Yale College only 13 years old.³¹ After his education he became a minister of the Church in Northampton, MA. Later he served as a missionary to Indians at Stockbridge, MA. Edwards wrote around 1000 sermons and various works on the Bible and theology. He was married to Sarah, and they had 11 children. Edwards died 1758.

In what way did Edward play an important role as a "grandfather" for modern missions?

There are many answers to that question. I have divided this section into two parts:

- His life as a missionary
- His writings

Edwards the missionary

In June 1751 Jonathan Edwards moved to Stockbridge, MA, to become a full time missionary among the Indians.³² His life as a missionary was busy. Edwards preached, taught the children and sorted out problems and complaints which occurred. He also fought for the rights of the Indians against white people who, against the policy of the Government, deprived Indians of their land. It was not an easy life. Edwards suffered under attacks from Indian bands and from time to time he was unable to work because of illness. Edwards died on the mission field, without having gained the success he wanted to.

Jonathan Edwards the theologian

Maybe Edwards is remembered as the "hellfire preacher", and some of us connect him with his sermon "Sinners in the hand of an angry God". Edwards was more than that, and he was more interested in God's glory than in his anger. He was first and foremost a unique theologian, writer and strategist. What influenced the missionary awakening most was his written works, more than his quite unsuccessful career as a missionary himself. Davies writes:

³¹ Christian History, Issue 23 (Vol. VIII, No. 3) pp. 4

³² In Northampton Edwards was dismissed from his pastorate. The invitation to work among the Indians came from The Boston Commissioners of the New England Company. Edwards was to replace the first missionary, John Sergeant, who had died. The invitation coincided with a call to become a pastor in the white congregation there. After some visits in Stockbridge Edwards moved there, followed by his wife and children some months later. (Davies, R.E. (1997:65)

Mission historians are aware that Edwards' writings were extremely influential in the beginnings of the modern missionary movement in Britain, including the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792 and the London Missionary Society three years later.³³

His writings were of course important when the Protestant missionary work developed in North America as well. Let us take a look at some of his most important writings, and see how they came to influence the missionary awakening.

David Brainard's biography

Brainard was a missionary working among the Indians, and a personal friend to Edwards. Brainard lived a short but intensive life on the field, and all the time he kept on writing a diary. Before he died, he asked Edwards to put his journals together and publish them. Edwards did, and with this publication, he wanted the life of Brainard to become an example of true spirituality, and also serve as a model of a modern missionary. Edwards gave the world, through the fascinating and well written journals of Brainard, an example of how to work in mission. This would be a source of inspiration for many key persons in the missionary awakening, e.g. William Carey, who mentions Brainard three times in his *Enquiry*. He brought a copy of it to India, gained strength and inspiration by reading from it. The biography of Brainard almost became "a second Bible" to Carey.

History of the work of Redemption

In this book Edwards describes the whole plan God has for the redemption of the world, from the creation and fall until the new heaven and earth will come. What is important about this book is how Edwards, a Calvinist, sheds new light on the issue of the Great Commission in Matt. 28:19-20. We have seen that in Protestant thinking since the days of the Reformers, the Great commission, as well as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit with signs and miracles, was given to the apostles exclusively. They have had a unique role, and therefore the Great Commission had been completed with them.

Edwards acknowledges the exclusivity of the ministries of the apostles, but he does not stay there. The commission Jesus gave was not only for the apostles of that time, it is relevant for all times. Until the Gospel has reached the whole of

³³ Davies, R.E. (1997:60)

humankind, it is not yet fulfilled, and therefore Edwards saw it as permanently relevant.

1781 Andrew Fuller, influenced by Edwards, wrote his work *The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptance*. In this work he turned against the “hyper-Calvinism” to which he himself once had adhered. Fuller became one of the leading evangelical theologians of his period, and one of the founders of B.M.S.³⁴ As we later will see, William Carey would write a whole chapter on this, arguing that the Great commission is still binding.

A Humble attempt

In this writing, which Edwards finished when David Brainard spent his last days sick in Edwards home, he proposes a program for unity in prayer for revival and the coming of God’s kingdom. Edwards saw united prayer as a major means to prepare the way for revival and the spreading of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. He read the Bible and saw how God had foretold in the Scriptures of a time when his church will embrace all nations. Edwards was optimistic, and his vision was big:

It is often foretold and signified, in a great variety of strong expressions, that there should a time come, when *all nations*, throughout the whole habitable world, should embrace the true religion, and be brought into the church of God.³⁵

By praying for God’s outpouring of his Holy Spirit as means to make way for the revival, Edwards in a wise way combines God’s sovereignty (so important in Calvinistic thinking) and the active contribution of men (prayer). This book had an enormous impact, not so much when it was first published 1749, but the more when John Sutcliff re-published it 1789, in due time for the missionary awakening. The vision Edwards held out obviously affected many evangelicals and resulted in active response from many churchleaders. In many places leaders from different churches and denominations came together in “concerts of prayer” to pray for revival and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Edwards prayercall, and the prayermeetings as a result, can be directly linked to the beginning of the modern missionary movement and the explosion of the many missionary societies. It is clear that B.M.S. (1792) and L.M.S.

³⁴ Van den Berg (1956:117)

³⁵ Edwards (1974:285)

(1795) were founded as a direct response to the prayer call Edwards raised in *Humble Attempt*,³⁶ and the same can certainly be said of others.

The Nature of True Virture

In this work, which was one of Edwards last writings, he set forth the concept of “love for being in general”. This concept was later developed by Samuel Hopkins in his idea of “disinterested benevolence”.³⁷ This idea became a strong motivation for evangelicals in North America to reach all men with the Gospel, starting with Indians and black people and continuing to the rest of the world. Samuel Hopkins is sometimes referred to being the father of modern missions in North America.

Conclusion on Edwards

Edwards was an optimistic postmillennialist.³⁸ He was convinced that the Great Awakening was from God, and that he lived in the end time when God was working through his Spirit in a special way to fulfill his plans. Christianity would be revived, the papacy would be overthrown, the Jews converted and the Islamic world subdued to the true religion. At the end the Gospel would reach the ends of the earth. That was his vision, and the spiritual revival was the beginning of this mighty work of God. The Lord would equip his people and give them the wisdom and strength they needed to fulfill this task.

Does this sound like a typical Calvinist? Not really... But we should remember that through his life Edwards was a convinced Calvinist who emphasized the ‘Glory of God’ and believed that the sovereign God opened up the opportunities in his own good time. Edwards believed for example that even if the Great Awakening was the start of God’s mighty work in reviving his church and spreading of the Gospel, this would probably not be completed before the year 2000.³⁹ Edwards saw no possibility to force God’s hand and going ahead his leading.

³⁶ In 1784 the Northamptonshire Association of Baptist churches called to prayer, and the origins of both BMS and LMS can be traced to the issue of this call. In Stanley (1990:57)

³⁷ Davies (1997:60)

³⁸ To keep it short; in the Great awakening Edwards saw the way leading to the coming of the Messianic kingdom, the millennial period foretold in Isaiah and Revelation 20. The Gospel would reach all men, until the number of the heathen was completed, and then the time would come when the redeemed of God would live and reign with Christ a thousand years (Rev 20:6). In Christian History, Issue 23, Vol. VIII, No. 3)

³⁹ Davies (1997:64)

Having said that, it is clear that Edwards brought something new to Calvinistic circles, in England, Scotland and North America. He was able to combine Calvinistic theology with a warm evangelistic emphasis on prayer and action. Therefore, he has a unique role as the theologian who in many ways inspired the Protestant missionary awakening, on both sides of the Atlantic. Let me end with Davies' words:

Of course, he [Edwards] was read and studied by Christians on a variety of topics, especially Revivals, as further awakenings occurred through that century, but the close connection between Revival, prayer and the worldwide spread and triumph of the Gospel was already kept before the minds of Edwards' readers. Jonathan Edwards is truly "the theologian of the missionary awakening."⁴⁰

3.2.5 Conclusion on Spiritual revivals

To summarize this, we have to say that the great missionary awakening was in many ways a child of the evangelical revivals in Britain and North America. We have seen just a few examples of the many links from the most important figures of this era to the very awakening of Protestant missions. What happened can be said in a simple way; They broke theological barriers and gave new motives for praying, preaching and working towards revival among all people of all nations in the whole world. God's grace revealed in the Gospel was something given to all people, and everyone was able to respond to this grace. They challenged the church, as well as individual Christians, to wake up and take their faith seriously, and they gave people the tools to do it.

3.3 The Enlightenment as a factor behind the Missionary awakening

We will now turn to the second 'wheeltrack' on our road, and now we approach the question from a slightly different angle. The question is; can we find inspiration behind the missionary awakening in the era of the Enlightenment? Some would say no, and they would suggest that the evangelical awakenings of the 18th century was a reaction against the rationalistic approach of the Enlightenment towards religion.

⁴⁰ Davies (1999:14)

Looking from that perspective it seems like a long shot to link the missionary awakening with the Enlightenment. But is there another perspective as well which can give us a fuller understanding? I think so, and that is what I am going to present in the following section.

3.3.1 A definition of the term ‘the Enlightenment’

Let us first begin by defining the concept “the Enlightenment”. Oxford English Dictionary gives the following definition:

A European intellectual movement of the late 17th and 18th centuries, heavily influenced by the thinking of 17th-century philosophers and scientists such as Descartes, Locke, Newton, and having at its core a belief in reason as the key to human knowledge and progress, a sense of religious tolerance, and a distrust of superstition.⁴¹

McGrath writes about the Enlightenment:

It is a loose term, defying precise definition, embracing a cluster of ideas and attitudes characteristic of the period 1720-80, such as the free and constructive use of reason in an attempt to demolish old myths which were seen to have bound individuals and societies in the past.⁴²

McGrath says that it would be unfair to refer to the Enlightenment as the age of reason, without explaining what you mean. The Middle Ages was just as much an age of reason as the Enlightenment. The crucial difference was how reason was used and related to during this era. What was emphasised was the ability of human reason to penetrate mysteries of this world, and the strong conviction of the individual’s right to use it. Cassirer writes:

Have the courage to use your own understanding; this is the motto of the Enlightenment.⁴³

The Enlightenment was not one single movement, but a diversity of thoughts and attitudes. McGrath says:

⁴¹ The Oxford English Reference Dictionary, pp. 468

⁴² McGrath (ed) (1993:150)

⁴³ This statement is said by Hegel, the German philosopher of the Enlightenment. (Cassirer (1951:163)

If there is any common element underlying the movement, it perhaps lies more in *how* those who were sympathetic to its outlook thought than *in* what they thought.⁴⁴

This might help us a bit. This is not the place to define the term Enlightenment in detail, we will later take a closer look on different aspects of the Enlightenment when relating it to missions. The next step in our research is to see the relationship with Protestant Christian thinking.

3.3.2 The Enlightenment and Protestantism

First of all we must acknowledge the critique of Christianity that came with the Enlightenment. This critique was based upon the strong belief in the potency of human reason, and the tendency to scrutinize everything with rational arguments. Thus, religion became the object of critique for its irrational dimensions. Thinkers of the Enlightenment challenged fundamental doctrines in Christianity such as the divinity of Jesus, the virgin birth, original sin, the status and interpretation of the Bible and so on. Protestant theology from 18th century onwards has indeed been affected and shaped by this critique. Much of it became a reaction against, or an attempt to adopt the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Having acknowledged this, I am afraid I do not have the place here to look in detail at the critique of Christianity by the Enlightenment. What I want to do here is to see the influences.

The general view is that Protestant thinking, in contrast to Catholic or Eastern Orthodox theology, was open to the new wave of thoughts which arose from the Enlightenment and its aftermaths. Why is that? McGrath gives some suggestion:

- *Protestant churches had no Pope.* The lack of a centralized authoritative structure gave Protestant churches much more freedom to respond and react to local circumstances, ideologies and political influences than Roman Catholicism.
- *The nature of Protestantism itself.* Protestantism was born out of a spirit of protest. The Reformation challenged religious authority and also held as a principle ‘the

⁴⁴ McGrath (ed) (1993:150)

reformed church must always be the church which is reforming itself'.⁴⁵ This attitude resonated with the ideals of the Enlightenment, and led to an openness to absorb them. - *The relation of Protestantism and the universities*. From the beginning, Protestantism recognized the importance of higher education of its ministers. Thus there was a natural link between Enlightenment and Protestantism, through the universities.

David Bosch summaries this influence of the Enlightenment upon Protestantism by making the following statement:

In the case of Protestantism, by contrast, [to Catholicism] virtually everything that happened since the eighteenth century was, in one way or another, profoundly influenced by the Enlightenment.⁴⁶

If this is true, how clear are the connections between the Enlightenment and missions?

3.3.3 The Enlightenment and mission

Now we have come to the important part, how did the Enlightenment influence missionary thinking? The fact that it did must be quite obvious, the missionary movement was formed by people of this time and it would have been strange if they had not responded in any way to the new way of thinking. But there are different opinions (as always) among scholars about how much the missionary awakening was influenced by the the Enlightenment. Bosch goes very far when saying:

It was inevitable that the Enlightenment would profoundly influence mission thinking and practice, the more so since the entire modern missionary enterprise is, to a very real extent, a child of the Enlightenment.⁴⁷

Perhaps Bosch goes too far. At least if he means that the whole missionary awakening can be explained only by putting it in a box labelled 'the Enlightenment'. It seems that Bosch uses the term 'Enlightenment' in a very broad sense, explaining almost everything of significance that happened in Western Protestantism after 17th

⁴⁵ McGrath (1993:151)

⁴⁶ Bosch (1991:262)

century as an influence of the Enlightenment.⁴⁸ Brian Stanley opposes such a view in his article *Enlightenment and Mission: A Re-evaluation*. He writes:

The modern Protestant missionary movement was generally characterised by an unshakeable confidence in rational knowledge as an ally of Christian proclamation, a belief in the superiority and regenerative potential of Western technology and civilisation and a tendency to dismiss other religions as “heathen idolatry”. None of these three central features, however, can be neatly “explained” by simple reference to the Enlightenment.⁴⁹

Stanley argues that the picture is much more complex than what Bosch (and others) hold, and the term ‘Enlightenment’ cannot be used as a way to explain everything that the Protestant missionaries thought and did. Much of Protestant thinking has deep roots in Medieval thinking and practise, let alone in the Reformation. The Enlightenment did not just erase all that.

Having said that, even Stanley acknowledges that the missionary movement has influences from the Enlightenment, although it is not a child of it.

My suggestion is that instead of referring to ‘the Enlightenment’ we better call it ‘modern Western thought’. With that term we avoid confusing different opinions of what the Enlightenment really was, and in the same time we open up for the same kind of broad definition Bosch has. Let us therefore define modern Western thought as the new way of looking at the world, influenced by the Enlightenment, which occurred at the 18th century. It was born out of the Enlightenment, but it was more than a philosophy, it was a paradigm shift. Let us take a closer look at what new aspects this ‘modern Western thought’ introduced in the society. Above all the question remains; where can we see that it helped to launch the missionary awakening.

The strong belief in human reason

A strong belief in the “innocent” human reason, free from presuppositions and tradition, was significant. Reason was a gift to all human beings given by nature. Every human being was born with the capacity to think and act in a rational way.

⁴⁷ Bosch (1991:274)

⁴⁸ Bosch defines the Enlightenment as a paradigm-shift in European peoples’ worldview and thinking which was introduced by people who lived as early as in the 16th century. Bosch lists people like Copernicus (1473-1543), Bacon (1561-1626), Galilei (1564-1642), Descartes (1596-1650) and in a later stage Locke (1632-1704), Spinoza (1632-1677), Leibnitz (1646-1716) and Newton (1642-1717). (Bosch 1991:263)

Whether or not she did that was a matter of education, a matter of being enlightened. The strong emphasis on human reason was, as I have said, often used as means to criticise classical Christian doctrines. To meet this criticism, Protestant theologians had to re-evaluate many of the fundamental beliefs within Christianity, and as a respond to modern rationalistic thought, many Protestant theologians adjusted their faith into a rationalistic Christian faith. The evangelical revivals can therefore be seen as a reaction against cold rationalistic Christianity.

But can we trace influence from modern rationalism within the modern missionary enterprise? After all that is the question of this chapter. I think we can. We can for example see it in Jonathan Edwards. I am not suggesting that Edwards was a product of the Enlightenment. I would rather say that in Edwards we can see a theologian of the 18th century influenced by modern Western thought. And not only influenced by it, also *using* it for the sake of missions. Edwards, as we have seen, was a brilliant theologian, able to use modern ways of communicating the old message of the Gospel. In his book *Christian knowledge* he states how important it is for every Christian to grow in knowledge of the divine truth.⁵⁰ We can say the same about William Carey. Carey's *Enquiry* is a good example of an empirical analysis of the present world religions,⁵¹ and his arguments are as much addressed to the human reason as human emotions.

Some would even see in the missionary awakening a form of alliance between Rationalism and Pietism, even though it might be an exaggeration. Van den Berg writes:

Though Frick certainly goes to far when he sees in the British missionary awakening an alliance between Rationalism and Pietism, yet it is true that British Evangelicalism tried to absorb the positive elements of the rationalism-latitudinarian influence.⁵²

⁴⁹ Stanley (1996:4)

⁵⁰ Edwards gives very practical directions how to grow in knowledge such as reading of the Scriptures, other books and improve conversation with others. (Edwards (1974:162)

⁵¹ As we will see later in this work, Carey *Enquiry* contents a long presentation of the present state of the world's nations, people and their religions. He presents a comprehensive list of geographical and demographical data very typical for the 18th century and its concern for encyclopaedic analysis. (Stanley (1996:8)

⁵² Van den Berg (1956:124)

Another interesting thing is to see how much Protestant mission and education went hand in hand. Wherever the missionaries went, they built schools, published books and scriptures as part of their work. All this was part of the strong belief in the importance of education to bring light to ‘savaged minds’. Listen to what William Carey writes in a letter 1815:

...Pay the outmost attention to the Schools. I consider Schools as one of the most effectual means of spreading the light of the Gospel through the world.⁵³

To this picture belongs also the work of The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, S.P.C.K. It was founded as early as 1698 by some Anglican laymen, and the intention was to combat ‘the gross ignorance of the Christian religion’⁵⁴. Striking is to see that the weapon they chose to use was knowledge, indeed a fruit of the Enlightenment. S.P.C.K. soon became an effective instrument of supporting the missionaries overseas with Christian literature, and here are clear links to the missionary awakening.

The strong believe in progress

People became masters of their own fate, and expressed a strong optimism and excitement when discovering new areas in science, medicine and geography. Western technology became the ideal, and some saw the development as an inevitable process that would reach every culture. The ‘light’ would even reach undeveloped people, and let them taste the fruits of *modernization*.

Here we have a brilliant example of how modern thought influenced mission. We can see links to Edward’s optimistic post-millennialism, and the belief in the spreading of the gospel to all nations on earth. Bosch writes:

The idea of the imminent this-worldly global triumph of Christianity is a recent phenomenon and intimately related to the modern spirit. Sometimes it manifested itself as the belief that the entire world would soon be converted to the Christian faith; at other times Christianity was regarded as an irresistible power in the process of reforming the world, eradicating poverty, and restoring justice for all.⁵⁵

⁵³ Carter (ed.) (2000:169)

⁵⁴ Souvenir brochure of S.P.C.K. (1998:12)

⁵⁵ Bosch (1991:271)

Let us also remind ourselves what Edwards wrote in his *Humble attempt*:

A time shall come wherein religion and true Christianity shall in every respect be uppermost in the world; wherein God will cause his church to to "arise and shake herself from the dust, and put on her beautiful garments, and sit down on a throne; and the poor shall be raised from the dust, and the beggar from the dunghill, and shall be set among princes, and made to inherit the throne of God's glory."⁵⁶

This is indeed a strong belief in progress. I am not saying that the optimistic postmillennialism, so important in launching the missionary awakening, was only a product of modern Western thought, but there are very significant similarities. We cannot ignore those similarities.

The faith in humankind

From being God centred the Western world view became human centred, from being theocentric it became anthropocentric. From being focused on church and society, individuals were liberated from the dominion of the Church, i.e. God. Bosch writes:

The free and "natural" human being was infinitely perfectible and should be allowed to evolve along the lines of his or her own choice.⁵⁷

These were the times of the freedom of mind and speech and the concept of equal rights. These rights were not primarily derived from religion, but from nature, from humanity in itself.

Maybe most important of all in this is the modified relation between Church and State. In the Medieval worldview people related to God in the following order: God → Church → King and Nobles → People → Animals, Plants and Objects. With the Enlightenment a new way of thinking arrived where people began to see themselves as beings related to God directly, no longer by way of king or church.

Here it is easy to see how missionary awakening was influenced by modern thought. The major argument behind the missionary awakening was that relevance of the Gospel to the whole mankind. Every human being carries a conscience and a free will, by which she was able to respond to the Gospel and to God himself. What is this if not a product of modern thinking, a strong influence of the Enlightenment? Stanley writes on this, and I think he has got an important point:

⁵⁶ Edwards (1974:287)

⁵⁷ Bosch (1991:267)

It was precisely here that Enlightenment empiricism and “common-sense” philosophical method supplied Evangelicalism with the ammunition it needed to counter both hyper-Calvinist and rationalist forms of scepticism about the potential of the heathen for salvation.⁵⁸

A striking example of this is found in Edwards’ *Freedom of will*.⁵⁹ In this work we can see much of influence from modern Western thought. E.g. when Edwards defines what the free will of man is, he refers to John Locke, an important character of the Enlightenment.⁶⁰ Edwards also wrote about the concept he called ‘religious affections’. When constructing this concept, Edwards was indeed inspired by Locke. Smith writes:

His strategy was to find a philosophical concept through which to express precisely the experiential element in faith, but also to connect it with an understanding that allows for rational control by the ideas found in the doctrine.⁶¹

The Evangelicals, as well as the missionaries, believed in the ability of individuals to respond to God’s word. Therefore they preached the Gospel to individuals rather than to societies and communities. It is also striking to see the forming of missionary societies as a product of modern thought. They were not formed out of church initiative, rather a product of individuals responding to God’s call to mission.

3.3.4 Conclusion on the Enlightenment

I have given examples of some areas where we can see influences from the Enlightenment spirit. There is much more to say on this, but I will not give more space to it here. How much of influence we see depends on what we mean by the Enlightenment. Bosch’s opinion is extreme, maybe because he uses the term in perhaps too broad a sense. Others would have chosen the other alternative and see

⁵⁸ Stanley (1996:10)

⁵⁹ Edwards (1974:5)

⁶⁰ Edwards found great inspiration in Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and he was deeply influenced by Locke’s appeal to experience and the notion of a new simple idea that is beyond the human power to create. (Smith, J.E. “Puritanism and Enlightenment: Edwards and Franklin” in *Knowledge and belief in America* (Shea & Huff (ed.) 1995:199)

⁶¹ Smith, J.E. “Puritanism and Enlightenment: Edwards and Franklin” in *Knowledge and belief in America* (Shea & Huff (ed.) 1995:201)

the whole evangelical movement as a reaction against the rationalistic spirit, and looking on the missionary awakening from that perspective.

I would like to choose the middle way and say; The missionary explosion as a whole cannot be seen as a child of the Enlightenment. But there are links and influences. Yes, the evangelical awakening was a reaction against rationalism by claiming that the Gospel must be received not only on a rational level, but in one's heart, mind and soul. In this process the emotional experience is not irrelevant.

Nevertheless, there are areas where we can say that the Enlightenment-spirit of that time helped to launch the missionary awakening, such as the strong belief in progress, the freedom of the individual from the tutelage of the Church and the acknowledge of every human's ability to use his or her reason. And even if we disagree on *how much* this influenced Protestant missionary thinking, we can be convinced that modern thinking in many ways *shaped* the missionary awakening, and to some degree launched it.

3.4 Other aspects of the time

I think there were other things going on at this time that helped to launch the missionary awakening. There are of course many things to be mentioned, let me here stay with two important aspects.

3.4.1 A romantic spirit

By the same time as the missionary awakening the era of Romanticism flourished within European art and literature. People were not satisfied with the cold world view presented by Rationalism, and the romantic spirit of this time can be seen as a reaction against the Enlightenment. Rousseau had introduced the idea of the "*noble savage*"; savage people living close to the nature with a pure and simple mind, undestroyed by civilization. This was the picture people were given of people living far away from the European continent. Therefore, when ordinary people in Europe enlarged their horizons, their hearts and minds became filled with a '*romantic spirit*'. Of course this romantic view helped the missionary awakening,

and at best the missionaries transformed the spirit of romance into something positive, a spirit of enthusiasm for the sake of the Gospel. At worst this attitude went hand in hand with the feeling of superiority over non-Europeans. But one thing is clear, the missionary awakening had a touch of romance over it, although it was not its essence.

Together with this came the *passion for exploration*. The explorers also helped to bring a romantic picture of non-European people to the Western mind. One of the most famous explorers of this time was Captain *James Cook*. His voyages were presented in volumes which were read and admired by many, Protestant Christians included. Cook's journals brought a new sense of enlarged horizons, which gave birth to more exploration, and even greater interest and so on. This growing interest of the non-European world of course influenced evangelical Christians, and helped to stir a fascination for mission. William Carey read the volumes of Cook and was inspired by them, and he was not the only one.

3.4.2 The political situation in Europe

The time of the missionary awakening was the time of political changes in Europe. In France, this was the time of revolution, and this affected most of Europe. While the winds of revolution blew over the continent, Britain and America had a time of political stability. Because of this fact, Britain had time and opportunity to become a stronger nation on the international scene, not at least through trade. Through the British East India Company a road to commerce was open, and so India became incorporated with the British Empire. This also opened the doors for mission, which Carey, and others, used. This is not to say that the missionaries could 'surf on the wave of colonialism'. Missionaries were not popular, especially not in the beginning of the missionary era. Often their work was hindered by trade-companies who feared that the work of mission could threaten the development of commerce. We will see this when looking more at Carey. Nevertheless, it is not a coincidence that the first British mission field were India and South Seas. Brian Stanley writes:

In this general and quite unremarkable sense the British awakening had undeniable connections with British expansion, if we extend that term to include geographical exploration as well as the growth of British power.⁶²

It is obvious that we can see links between the political situation and the missionary awakening, but can we simply say that they were interdependent on each other? Or in other words, did the missionaries go with the intention of expanding the colonial powers such as the British, Dutch or the German empires? Speaking of the early missionaries, the answer must be no. There are three main reasons why:

1. Evangelicalism, from which the missionary awakening came, was to some degree a reaction against the combination of the interests of Church and State.⁶³
2. The interests of the evangelical revivals were primarily religious, not political. They aimed at personal conversion, not promotion of their home-state. E. Williams wrote to the missionaries of the L.M.S. that the motive had neither to be “your own reputation” nor “the glory of the British name”.⁶⁴
3. The interests of the missionaries and the State often clashed, and there are many examples of colonial powers hindering the work of missions. There were of course exceptions to this, but generally speaking, colonial interests and mission did not go hand in hand by this time.

Having said that, it seems that although the colonial expansion of Western Protestant nations was by its nature secular, later on came a time when missionaries were welcomed as partners in the establishing of the colonial empires. Bosch writes:

As it became customary for British missionaries to labor in British colonies, French missionaries in French colonies, and German missionaries in German colonies, it was only natural for these missionaries to be regarded as both vanguard and rearguard for the colonial powers.⁶⁵

Bosch indeed has got a point here. But we should be aware of the fact that he is writing about the modern missionary era as a whole. What happened later (in later 19th century) must not necessarily be true about the beginning (late 18th and early 19th

⁶² Stanley (1990:58)

⁶³ Van den Berg (1956:146)

⁶⁴ Van den Berg (1956:146)

⁶⁵ Bosch (1991:304)

century), even if we talk about the same movement. Up til 1813 British missionaries in India were not free to work in territories belonging to the East India Company without interference of the Government.⁶⁶ Bosch also admits that it was mainly during the Victorian era in Britain that the colonial officials became aware of the benefits mission work had for the empire. Therefore I think it is fair to say that the Protestant missionaries in the beginning of 19th century did not go with political intentions, although they later on became involved in the colonial interests. The same is to say about other colonial powers, it was later during the 19th century they valued the contribution missionaries could make in their overseas territories. The German Chancellor von Caprivi stated in 1890: “Gun and Bible should go hand in hand.”⁶⁷

Quite famous is also the statement made by David Livingstone in the middle of 1860s: “Christianity and commerce”⁶⁸.

Our conclusion can be stated as follows: Protestant mission would later in the 19th century develop clear links to colonial expansion, but the missionary awakening was in no aspect launched by political interests. Though, one thing is for sure, the doors to South sea and India which were opened by trade, were also entered by missionaries.

⁶⁶ Davis (1993:346)

⁶⁷ Bosch (1991:304)

⁶⁸ Livingstone saw “Christianity, Commerce and Civilization” as the only way to fight the slave trade in Africa. In *Christian History*, Issue 56, (Vol. XVI, No. 4.) pp. 2

4. MOTIVES FOR MISSION AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PROTESTANT MISSIONARY MOVEMENT

4.1 Introduction

This section has as its main sources Van den Berg's *Constrained by Jesus' love* and Bosch's *Transforming Mission*. Due to lack of space in this work I will only include a few motives. It is difficult to pin down the most important and influential ones, but I have tried. I think it is a good idea to have this section after the main investigation in chapter 3, because I will refer to what is written there, and all of what is included in this section is best understood in light of previous chapters. But this chapter should also be seen as a continuation of the investigation of the main question of this work; what made them go?

It is very interesting to try to understand the motives behind the missionary awakening. They are of course many and sometimes hard to separate from each other. The way I have separated them here is just a means to make it more easily understood. They were seldom used in this structured way, although some missionaries and societies stressed different motives during different times.

4.2 The motive of love and compassion

'Christ's love' was a common expression of the teaching of the evangelical revivals. The theology was that Christian love could be seen in action. This action had its source in Christ's love. It was the direct result of Christ's love towards other people, which was such a strong theme in the evangelical revivals. But it was also understood as a response of the experience of God's love in one's life. Action became a way of showing gratitude. What else could they do when God had made such a difference in their lives? It was like a debt, or saying it with Paul's words: "The love of Christ constraineth us".⁶⁹ This 'constraining love' became a strong

⁶⁹ 2 Cor 5:14 (American Standard Version)

element in the missionary attitude. The motive was in itself purely soteriological, the missionaries proclaimed the salvation found in Christ for lost souls. But sometimes mixed with this compassion was the feeling of pity for human misery and the promoting of welfare among the heathen nations. This feeling was not always free from the feeling of cultural superiority, which has been so largely criticised over the years.

But we can also find an awareness of the ‘white man’s debt’ and Van den Berg suggests that it functioned as a motive in the missionary awakening.⁷⁰ The abuses made by British rule in India, the slavery system and other things became known and criticised by Evangelicals and missionaries. Carey writes in his *Enquiry* about the non-pleasing results of earlier mission work done by Europeans (obviously not Protestants):

It is also a melancholy fact, that the vices of Europeans have been communicated wherever they themselves have been; so that the religious state of even heathens has been rendered worse by intercourse with them!⁷¹

The awareness of earlier mistakes done by Europeans towards non-Europeans became an opportunity to go and restore by bringing peace, life and salvation found in Christ only. They were totally convinced that this time none of the earlier mistakes would be made.

4.3 The eschatological motive

This was one of the most important theological, and indeed psychological, motives for mission. Van den Berg writes:

There exists an important connection between the missionary awakening and the eschatological expectations of the group in which the awakening took its beginning.⁷²

⁷⁰ Van den Berg (1956:132)

⁷¹ Carey (1792:90)

⁷² Van den Berg (1956:160)

The theological foundation was laid by Edwards, as we have seen. Fuller, Carey and others could contribute to the raising of expectations of the coming of the kingdom. Expectations of great things were in the air. Many of the leading figures in the missionary awakening believed that they were standing on the threshold of the millennial period, and they saw signs in the Scriptures as well as in world politics. This optimistic post-millennialism was very influential in the L.M.S. Van den Berg gives the example of a sermon on Eph. 1:10, made by John Hey in the L.M.S:

What a pleasing change now takes place! How solemn is this time! How eventful is this period!... the powers of darkness grim horribly... But let us take courage: ... we may be confident of success.⁷³

4.4 The Great Commission

The passages in Matt 28:19 –20 and Mark 16:15 are usually called the Great Commission of Christ. For us it is known as *the* text in NT when speaking of motives for mission. Therefore it has been interesting to see how little it meant to the Reformers and their successors. The question is then; how important did it become during the missionary awakening?

William Carey dedicated a whole chapter in his *Enquiry* to the question whether the Great Commission was still binding for the Church of his time. His intention was to give the right meaning of this command, and to combat the “hyper-Calvinistic” understanding of it that had a stronghold in the Baptist circles where Carey was active. Carey proves, by using good exegesis, that the Great Commission must be valid today, because we understand the rest of the promises and commands in that passage as valid.⁷⁴ Carey’s *Enquiry* became important in re-evaluating the Great Commission, and it inspired many after him.⁷⁵

⁷³ Van den Berg (1956:161)

⁷⁴ See chapter 5 on William Carey in this work, and also in Carey (1792:36-37)

⁷⁵ Davies also points out the possibility that Carey himself might have been inspired by two English speaking ministers who wrote on this earlier than he did. They were the Scottish Presbyterian R Millar and the English Congregationalist P. Doddridge. In Davies (1996:48)

The Great Commission became an important theological motivation in the missionary awakening, and in most evangelical circles it was recognized. Just one example; when the Church Mission Society was formed 1799 one of the resolutions was that obedience to the Great commission was seen as “a duty, highly incumbent upon every Christian”.⁷⁶ It is clear, however, that it never stood on its own; it was always combined with other motives. But it functioned as a good weapon to fight eschatological understandings which stood in opposition to the missionary awakening by saying that the time of the heathen had not yet arrived.

4.5 Conclusion on the different motives

There were, of course, many other motives present in the missionary awakening than the few presented here. The focus differed from person to person, and the motives were mixed. When you try to investigate motives there are two ditches you can fall into. One is, only to glorify the good ones in a naive way. The second is to scrutinize them in too much detail, finding that people did not live up to their words. Human motives are always a mixture of good and bad, and seldom found to be black or white. There will always be a gap between written intentions and the final result. We have to find the middle way, by acknowledging both good and bad motives.

What we can be sure of is the devotion for mission and the willingness to sacrifice themselves for the sake of Christ. This might have to do with a romantic view, but I am sure that it also sprung out of pure motives and love for the Lord. Bosch gives one example:

In 1823 the Church Missionary Society sent twelve missionaries to Sierra Leone; within ten months ten of them had died of fever. Yet the CMS did not abandon Sierra Leone; for every one who fell there was always another willing to take his or her place.⁷⁷

This willingness will always impress me, and I think it shows that even if the motives were different and shifting, these people were devoted to their call.

⁷⁶ Van den Berg (1956:165)

⁷⁷ Bosch (1991:287)

5. WILLIAM CAREY

The purpose of this chapter is to depict the man who is called “the father of Protestant mission”. I have chosen to focus on the years which led to the formation of a society, and the beginning of Carey’s service in India. I have also included a short overview of the message of the *Enquiry*.

5.1 Carey’s background

William Carey was born on August 17, 1761 in Paulerspury in the middle of England. He was brought up in a simple, ordinary family who belonged to the Anglican church. As a teenager he worked part time in a shoemaker workshop. When Carey was 22 he took over another shoemaking business, but he turned out to be an ineffective businessman for he did not have the right mind and attitude. Carey was more into reading and studying. He was only 12 when he learned Latin by himself, and after discovering a commentary on the New Testament in the shoemaking workshop he taught himself Greek.⁷⁸ Carey later learned Hebrew, French and Dutch, let alone all the languages he managed after several years working in India.

As I have mentioned before, Carey was a devoted reader of the journals of James Cook. Carey was so fascinated by James Cook that his boyhood friends nicknamed him after the adventurer, because Carey talked so much about him.⁷⁹ Carey later wrote:

Reading Cook’s voyages was the first thing that engaged my mind to think of missions.⁸⁰

Carey’s father was a clerk in the local Church of England parish, so young William was forced to attend church. But Carey would not stay within those walls. When he was in his twenties he listened to a sermon by Andrew Fuller, the local Baptist preacher. Carey became so moved that 1783 he decided to submit himself to

⁷⁸ Christian History, Issue 36, (Vol. XI, No. 4) pp. 9

⁷⁹ Christian History, Issue 36, (Vol. XI, No. 4) pp. 8

⁸⁰ Christian History, Issue 36, (Vol. XI, No. 4) pp. 10

baptism. Some years later he became a preacher in the small town of Moulton. It took another two years before he would be ordained, for the ordination committee first did not like his way of preaching. Carey spent his time preaching, teaching and cobbling, and, of course, reading. Besides the voyages of Cook, Carey consumed books like Guthrie's *Geographical Grammar*, John Entick's *The Present State of the British Empire* and the international news section in the weekly *Northampton Mercury*. Carey made himself a world map by pasting sheets of paper together, and he hung it in his cobbler's workshop. These were the days when the idea of a missionary society began to crystallize in Carey's mind.

5.2 The formation of a society

In 1786 Carey proposed his idea of forming a missionary society at a Baptist association meeting. His vision was not well received. The answer one of the ministers gave Carey⁸¹ can be seen as an old man's rebuke of a young, naive man. But most of all it shows the Calvinistic attitude that Carey had to fight against. The rebuke made Carey study further and he began work a book, his *Enquiry*, which was published in 1792.

In 1791, at a Baptist ministers' meeting, Carey heard two sermons that supported his thoughts. He immediately proposed the idea of organizing a missionary society. The response was cold, but Carey was invited to preach the following year. So he did, and the arguments in the sermon were based on the ideas of his *Enquiry*, which was about to be published. Carey preached from Isaiah 54:2-3 which says "enlarge the place of your tent". It was in this sermon Carey concluded with the famous call: Expect great things! Attempt great things!⁸²

Carey's sermon was strong, but still the response from the other ministers was filled with hesitation. Carey was desperate. It is said that when the group was ready

⁸¹ see footnote nr. 9

⁸² The statement is more known as "Expect great things from God! Attempt great things for God!" The phrases "from God" and "for God" was not actually the words of Carey, they have been added in a later stage to clarify God's role, which was implied in Carey's sermon. In *Christian History*, Issue 36, (Vol. XI, No. 4) pp. 1

to dismiss, Carey gripped Andrew Fuller's arm, saying: "Is nothing *again* going to be done?"⁸³

But this time things began to happen. And so on October 2, 1792, a Society "for the propagation of the Gospel among the heathen according to the recommendations of Carey's *Enquiry*" was formed by twelve Baptist ministers, among them A. Fuller, J. Ryland, J. Sutcliff and R. Hogg. The Baptist Missionary Society was born. It would not take many months before they could send out the first two missionaries. One of them was William Carey himself. But before I tell that story, let us take a closer look on Carey's important scripture, the *Enquiry*.

5.3 An *Enquiry*

It is very fascinating to read the very thoughts of the man who is called "the father of Protestant mission", and whose vision inspired so many to set up missionary societies. Carey's *Enquiry* was published 1792. Its full name was *An Enquiry into the obligations of Christians, to use means for the conversion of the Heathens. In which the religious state of the different nations of the world, the success of former undertakings, and the practicability of further undertakings are considered*. Typically for Carey's time, the long title reveals much information of the content of the book. Let us just briefly see what this thin book has to say.

In the first section of the *Enquiry* Carey writes about the Great Commission of Christ, found in Matt. 28:18-20. The question on Carey's mind was whether or not the Great Commission was fulfilled by the apostles, or if it was still relevant for the Church of Carey's time. As we have seen, the typical Protestant understanding had been that it was fulfilled by the apostles, and this was the view held by many of Carey's closest colleagues. The *Enquiry* challenged that view.

Carey writes that the Great Commission is still binding because the rest of the context of Matt. 28:18-20 is. We still follow the command of baptizing, and the promise of Christ to be present cannot be limited to the apostles only. Carey writes:

⁸³ Christian History, Issue 36, (Vol. XI, No. 4) pp. 12

First, if the command of Christ to teach all nations be restricted to the apostles, or those under immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, then that of baptizing should be so too; and every denomination of Christians, except the Quakers, do wrong in baptizing with water at all.⁸⁴

Together with these and other arguments, Carey concludes: Christ's commission is still binding, and we ought to do something about it!

Section two contains a review of former undertakings for the conversion of the heathens. In other words, Carey goes through the history of the church to see what has been done. He gives much attention to Paul and the early church, but he also mentions later efforts, e.g. The Moravians, whose work he praises.

In the third part Carey presents the nations of the world with their geographical extent, their population and their religious status. It is amazing to see with what precision Carey writes about this. To get a taste I will here include the first section of the list.⁸⁵ I could not help myself choosing the part where Carey gives an exact description of the people of Sweden. This shows what kind of argument Carey preferred; the presentation is made in true 'encyclopaedic spirit':

EUROPE.

Countries.	EXTENT.		Number of Inhabitants.	Religion.
	Length. Miles.	Breadth. Miles.		
Great-Britain	680	300	12,000,000	Protestants, of many denominations.
Ireland	285	160	2,000,000	Protestants, and Papists.
France	600	500	24,000,000	Catholics, Deists, and Protestants.
Spain	700	500	9,500,000	Papists.
Portugal	300	100	2,000,000	Papists.
SWEDEN, including Sweden proper, Gothland, Shonen, Lapland, Bothnia, and Finland	800	500	3,500,000	The Swedes are serious Lutherans, but most of the Laplanders are Pagans, and very superstitious.
Isle of Gothland	80	23	5,000	
— Oefel	45	24	2,500	
— Oeland	84	9	1,000	
— Dago	26	23	1,000	

⁸⁴ Carey (1792:36)

⁸⁵ Carey (1792:65)

Carey concludes this chapter with the statement:

All these things are loud calls to Christians, and especially to ministers, to exert themselves to the utmost in their several spheres of action, and to try to enlarge them as much as possible.⁸⁶

In the fourth part Carey argues that there are no practical obstacles that can hinder us from bringing the Gospel to the heathens. He points at the apostles, for example, by saying:

It was no objection to the apostles and their successors, who went among the barbarous *Germans* and *Gauls*, and still more barbarous *Britons!* They did not wait for the ancient inhabitants of these countries, to be civilized, before they could be christianized, but went simply with the doctrine of the cross.⁸⁷

Carey also commands us to look on great examples like the Moravians, Eliot and Brainard. What they did we can do as well. Carey gives very practical advices about how we can put words into practise. Questions like food, social life and so on is dealt with.⁸⁸ Carey is quite optimistic about the possibilities to become an effective missionary. Listen to what he writes about the issue of learning a new language:

It is well known to require no very extraordinary talents to learn, in the space of a year, or two at most, the language of any people upon earth, so much of it at least, as to convey any sentiments we wish to their understandings.⁸⁹

In the last section he gives his vision about organizing the workers into teams, and most important of all, the vision of founding Missionary societies. This vision, and his own example, would change the history of mission, and the history of the world, I dare to say. Carey promotes prayer, but not only prayer, prayer *and* action:

We must not be contented however with praying, without exerting ourselves in the use of means for the obtaining of those things we pray for.⁹⁰

Carey writes that we must have courage to put our vision into reality to reach the heathens, and offer ourselves for that sake. He compares it with the secular trading companies, whose people are willing to take enormous risks to gain treasures here on

⁸⁶ Carey (1792:92)

⁸⁷ Carey (1792:95)

⁸⁸ Carey suggests that men ought to be married, and that the ideal is to work in teams, and in that way help each other. Carey (1792:99)

⁸⁹ Carey (1792:100)

⁹⁰ Carey (1792:107)

earth. How much more is it not worth for Christians to be willing to put effort into the work of the Lord, and rejoice on the last day, when the work is done and the harvest of people is collected.

This is the message of the *Enquiry*, a book every missionary today ought to read!

5.4 Carey – the missionary

On November 11, 1793 Carey and his family arrived in India, illegally. The East India Company did not permit missionaries to enter Bengal, so when they approached land, they were set in a small fishing boat to float into Calcutta. The great attempt had begun.

The first years were to become extremely hard. Trying to adopt to a new culture, language, food, fear of animals, and always being on the road trying to find a place to settle down; all this was hard on the Careys. Besides this, financial problems, health problems etc. followed the family. William's wife, Dorothy, who had followed her husband reluctantly to India, was seriously ill with dysentery, and in October 1794, their 5-year-old son Peter died from dysentery. Under this pressure she collapsed and became mentally ill, sliding into a "delusional disorder", or what we today would call a psychosis. This poor mental state made her jealous of her husband, cursing him and throwing accusations on him about his unfaithful living. She even threatened him with a knife once.⁹¹ Together with this their partner, John Thomas, who was sent out from BMS together with Carey, abandoned them several times and engaged in the rum business.

Those first years were indeed troublesome. Not a single person was converted the first six years of Carey's work in India.

⁹¹ Christian History, Issue 36, (Vol. XI, No. 4) pp. 30

5.4.1. The Serampore trio

Carey struggled, but things were to change. In October 1799 another three people arrived from England to help him. They were:

- *William Ward*, printer and editor. He was the one who set up a printing press for Scripture translation, and he was a skilled preacher.
- *Joshua Marshman*, a teacher, filled with knowledge. He ran the schools, and also helped in translating and preached.
- *Hannah Marshman*, married to Joshua. The first woman missionary to India, ran the mission household, and cared for Dorothy Carey, which of course helped William.

These three households became the Serampore trio. The name is taken from the place they worked, Serampore, near Calcutta. Working in teams, which was Carey's vision from the beginning, would become the way to move forward and work effectively. A boarding school was soon opened, and 1801 the first Bengali New Testament came out of the Serampore Press. And after seven years of hard labor, Carey baptized his first Indian convert, Krishna Pal.⁹²

Translating and printing Bibles would become the over all vision for Carey. In 1804 he wrote to Andrew Fuller back home in London. Carey needed money to be able to realize his dream; within 15 years he wished to have the Bible printed in all the languages of the Hindu world.⁹³ This vision was not shared by the others in the trio, but Carey proceeded. In 1808 his Sanskrit New Testament was published, and within the following 30 years parts of the Bible existed in 29 other languages and dialects. The translations were often poor, and needed to be revised, but it shows Carey's zeal for the work of the Lord.

The Serampore trio worked together for several years, and became a good example of the newborn Protestant Christian mission, an example others would follow for many years to come. To begin with, the missionaries in Serampore worked quite well and effectively together, but their mission was, of course, filled with

⁹² Christian History, Issue 36, (Vol. XI, No. 4) pp. 15

⁹³ Carter (ed) (2000:158)

problems, as any mission would be. The number of converts was far from satisfying, and they struggled with conflicts, both within the missionary team, and in relation to the missionary society in London. But one thing is for sure, they never gave up.

Many of the missionaries died at a young age, but not William Carey. Something, or someone, kept him alive until he reached the age of 73. Carey died in 1834 after a long life on the mission field.

5.5 What we can learn from William Carey

There are many things to say about this unique man, the “father of Protestant mission”. His life became a source of inspiration to many, and Carey himself followed in the footsteps of people like Brainard, the Moravians and others. His *Enquiry*, his devotion for the sake of converting the heathen, his ability to make dreams come true, all this became an example which many would follow for many years after his death. And so the story goes on and on, until this day.

What fascinated me most when reading the journals of Carey is the fact that even if he was a Godly, skilled and devoted man, he certainly had his struggles, doubts and hardships. But God used him, so he can use anyone.

As a conclusion I would like to take a few examples from the “Form of Agreement” which Carey and his colleagues put together in 1805. It tells about the role of the missionary, and it is striking to see how ‘modern’ these thoughts are. Most of it is so relevant that I think you could have found it in the scriptures of any typical mission organization of today. Here are a few examples:

...It is necessary, in our intercourse with the Hindoos, that, as far as we are able, we abstain from those things which would increase their prejudices against the Gospel. Those parts of English manners which are most offensive to them should be kept out of sight as much as possible.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Christian History, Issue 36, (Vol. XI, No. 4) pp. 34

...It is only by means of native preachers that we can hope for the universal spread of the Gospel throughout this immense continent. We think it our duty, as soon as possible, to advise the native brethren who may be formed into separate churches, to choose their pastors and deacons from their own countrymen.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Christian History, Issue 36, (Vol. XI, No. 4) pp. 34

6. CONCLUSION

Now that we have come so far in our investigation, how can we summarize the answers we have found? In this section I will try to make a short conclusion, without too much repetition of what has already been said.

6.1 What launched the Missionary awakening?

We have seen the role of the spiritual awakenings that flourished in Britain and North America. It was in this atmosphere of revival that the missionary explosion took place. It was, as we have seen, born out of these awakenings.

But spiritual experiences was not enough, theological reflection was needed as well. This was found in the works of Jonathan Edwards. His theories made a good foundation for others to read and build upon. He gave the theological motivation for world mission, and his prayer call inspired many Protestant Christians to engage in intercession for the sake of revival among all peoples of the earth. The history of Christian mission was changed by prayer.

But prayer must be combined with action. That was exactly the message of William Carey. His *Enquiry* told the whole Protestant world that there are no theological or practical excuses not to ‘use means for the conversion of the heathens’. Carey himself became an example who inspired many others to enter mission.

What about the second ‘wheeltrack’? With the Enlightenment Europe entered a new way of thinking, a new world view which we can call ‘modern Western thought’. The Protestant church was influenced by this stream, and it helped to launch the missionary movement. A new faith in humankind and human reason, a strong belief in progress, a new freedom of the individual; all this was transformed by the Protestant church into a strong assurance in the progress of the Gospel all over the world, and a belief in every individual’s right and ability to receive the good news.

These were also the times when Western people were given enlarged horizons by James Cook and other explorers, and the romantic picture it gave to non-European people surely gave mission a romantic flavour.

Practical circumstances also help to launch the missionary movement. Europe, and indeed Britain, grew stronger on the international scene, and new doors for commerce were opened for Protestant states, which before had been in the control of Catholic countries. And so those trade ways were used by missionaries.

All these factors mixed together became like an explosive paste. And at the end of 18th century and the beginning of the 19th; the “BANG” echoed throughout Protestant Europe and North America. The Great Missionary explosion was a fact, and history was about to be written.

6.2 What can our time learn from all this?

The very first thing we can learn from history is that we ought to learn from history. So much can be gained by that simple lesson. To know your history is to know yourself. To learn from history is not so much avoiding all the mistakes our forefathers made, although reading history can always teach you that we all are potential mistake-makers. However, I think it has more to do with getting to know your own roots. At the end of the day, we are only continuing a task given 2000 years ago. The Great Commission is binding for us today, and that is wonderful, but we are not the first to obey it. Many have gone before us, but do we know who they were? If we get to know them, we get know our own identity. And when we know our own identity, we are better prepared for the task of mission. It is simple as that.

What are the more specific things we can learn? For my next conclusion I want to point out three things that the missionary explosion can teach us:

Let us open ourselves to God's spirit. The time of the Protestant missionary awakening was a time where people's lives were touched by God. The Spirit of the Lord moved, and hearts were transformed, dreams were dreamt and visions were

seen. But nothing of this could have happened if people did not open their lives to God. The same is for us today.

To be open to the Spirit is also to be open to God's Word. Good mission theology is needed. The Reformers had neglected it, hence mission was neglected for 250 years. When a new attitude came it was well founded in Scripture, thanks to theologians like Edwards and others. The traditional Protestant understanding of mission, or the lack of it, did not hinder them from re-evaluating their understanding of the Great Commission in Matt 28:18-20. So must we in the same way never stop in the process of seeking more understanding. The early church did it, we ought to do it as well. Lesslie Newbigin writes:

The fulfillment of the mission of the Church thus requires that the Church itself be changed and learn new things. Very clearly the Church had to learn something new as a result of the conversion of Cornerlius and his household. And, once again, the point must be made: this is not an achievement of the Church but a work of the Spirit.⁹⁶

Only by an openness to God's spirit and his guidance through the Word we can fulfill the task of mission today.

Let us open ourselves to the world. The Protestant missionary awakening was a *modern* phenomenon, launched by modern Christians in a modern world. They opened themselves to the needs of the world, simply by looking at it through modern eyes. Edwards wrote theology to a modern Western society. Carey read the journals of James Cook, and was inspired by them. The missionary societies were a modern phenomenon, and the missionaries used contemporary tools to spread the Gospel.

If we wish to see another missionary awakening we must realize that we live in a *postmodern* world. We have entered the 21st century, and it is impossible to do mission in the same way as they did 200 years ago. But we can learn from them, and if the missionary awakening of that time required people to think in a modern way, a postmodern approach is surely required these days. Postmodern society raises many new challenges for the church. To be able to meet those challenges we must get to know our own time, a time of globalization, pluralism and new values. We need to think of and do mission in new way according to the current situation we live in.

⁹⁶ Newbigin (1989:124)

Jim Plueddemann writes in his article *SIM's Agenda for a Gracious Revolution*:

We need a gracious revolution in our thinking about world missions. We are not likely to be effective in the next century by merely becoming more efficient within the old paradigms.⁹⁷

Indeed true!

This is also a time when the world map of Christianity has changed. By the time of William Carey Europe was the center of the Christian church. That is not the case anymore. Today the stronghold of the Christian church has moved from the Western world to countries on which Carey only could write 'pagans' in the presentation in his *Enquiry*. Things have changed; is it then right to hang on to the typical Western way of thinking and doing mission? It cannot be. Maybe today the most relevant mission theology is written in Hindi or Swahili. The Protestant missionary awakening took place in the Western world. If we want to see the next missionary awakening we might better look South-East...

Let us pray! Everything starts with prayer. We have seen that the missionary awakening has deep roots in the prayer call made by Edwards. When people pray, situations change, and not only that, people change as well. I am sure that Christ's command still is valid:

Then he said to his disciples, "the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."⁹⁸

Interesting is the prayer call raised by the "24-7prayer" organization. It has responded to the needs of the young generation in the Western world, well qualified to be called nowadays' 'heathens'. "24-7" is a prayer movement inspired by the Moravians prayer watch. They have then adapted the concept to a postmodern society. Their aim is to get people to pray for a lost generation, and it is combined with active mission. This summer a prayer team from "24-7" is going to Ibiza, the notorious party island of Europe, often referred to as "Sodom and Gomorra", even by secular media.⁹⁹ I see this as a good example of postmodern mission, inspired by

⁹⁷ Plueddemann (1999:156)

⁹⁸ Matt. 9:37-38 (NIV Bible)

⁹⁹ www.24-7prayer.com

examples from the history and done in a relevant way. Indeed a way to learn from history.

6.3 What I have learned – a personal perspective

Let me finish by giving some personal thoughts. It would have been strange to write a paper like this without reflecting on my own situation. At some point during this writing I found my self affected, inspired, and perhaps changed. I would not call it a revolution, maybe a renewal. This is what happened:

As I got to know Jonathan Edwards, suddenly his prayer call reached my heart and made me believe in prayer again.

When I studied William Carey, his vision impressed me. But I think his personality, his courage and his perseverance made an even bigger impression.

So, how do I relate to the first wave of Protestant missionaries who went 200 years ago? Perhaps something like this:

I admire them. Not because they are my heroes. I admire them because they are my brothers and sisters, true friends in Christ. Spending time reading their stories, their journals and works written about them has made them come closer to me. I think it has made them more human in a sense. Yes, they were great, their contributions to world mission are invaluable. Still they were vulnerable human beings, small people with big visions.

Why they went? I am not sure I have come to the full answer on that question. Yes, I know a bit more about the factors that helped to launch the modern Protestant missionary era. But it seems like the reason why so many people suddenly entered mission will remain something of a mystery. Or maybe the answer is just a simple one; they loved Jesus. If you ask me; I am happy with that answer.

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