

THE MODERN MISSIONS MOVEMENT

I. Britain and the Modern Missionary Movement

A. Britain's Interest and Success in Missions

Britain's interest and success in spreading the Gospel message from the late eighteenth century resulted in the growth of global Evangelicalism.

B. William Carey

William Carey formed the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792. Other societies would be formed a few years later by Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Anglicans.

C. Hudson Taylor and Missions in China

James Hudson Taylor worked in China (1853-59).

II. The Origins of American Foreign Mission in the Nineteenth Century

A. Background

There were close ties between preachers, evangelists, and missionaries of England and the United States, but the U.S. would soon become the leader in world mission.

B. The Second Great Awakening

Congregationalists and Presbyterians were interested in planting churches at home and taking the gospel abroad during the Second Great Awakening. Missionary work was also done through voluntary societies.

C. Voluntarism and the Examples of Mary Webb and Samuel Mills

In the U.S. people attended churches voluntarily. They also voluntarily raised funds to support the needs of missions. A pioneer in the early American missions movement was Mary Webb (1779-1861). Webb formed the Boston Female Society for Missionary Purposes (1800). Samuel J. Mills (1783-1818), who had participated in the "haystack revival" at Williams College, was also a pioneer in the area of missions.

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D. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions

Samuel Mills (and others from Williams College) helped to form the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in 1810. By 1812 the ABCFM had commissioned five missionaries and sent them to Asia. Among them was the famous Baptist missionary, Adoniram Judson (1788 – 1850).

E. Women and Foreign Missions

Women were the backbone of foreign missions. Charlotte White was commissioned by the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions as a full-time missionary in 1816. By the end of the nineteenth century, approximately 60 percent of all foreign missionaries sent from the United States were women.

F. The American Bible Society (1816)

The American Bible Society (ABS) was formed as a non-denominational nonprofit organization in 1816. The purpose of the ABS was to publish and circulate copies of the Scriptures, without note or comment.

G. Manifest Destiny

Manifest Destiny is the belief that American settlers were destined to spread across the entire continent.

III. African Americans and the Missionary Movement

The British began sending missionaries to Africa in 1795 and American missionaries soon joined them. In 1820, the African Methodist Episcopal Church began sending its own African-American missionaries to evangelize Africa.

IV. The 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland

Some see this event as the beginning of the modern Protestant ecumenical movement. In the U.S., the Interdenominational Foreign Missions Association (IFMA) was formed in 1917. The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) was formed in 1941.

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INDUSTRIALIZATION, URBANIZATION AND THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

I. Introductory Comments

In post-Civil War America, churches multiplied and grew in membership. Protestantism remained dominant, but Roman Catholicism (largely because of immigration) was the single largest Christian denomination by 1925. Science and technology also brought tremendous change and many challenges to America and her churches.

II. Charles Darwin (1809-82)

Darwinism began to shake up long-held assumptions about God and humanity. Darwin published *The Origin of Species* in England in 1859 and *The Descent of Man* in 1871. Scientific methods and attitudes were extended to other fields such as history and economics (e.g., laissez-faire). In the churches, battles over evolution produced sharp divisions.

III. Technology

Technology affected the daily lives of most people. The period of discussion saw the rise of cities and developments in communication and transportation. These also affected the ways in which the churches pursued evangelism.

IV. Emerging Social Awareness

- A. Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* (1879) protested the vast inequity in wealth growing in the nation.
- B. Sociology soon became an accepted academic discipline by 1880. The Lutheran J.H.W. Stuckenberg also published *Christian Sociology* that same year.
- C. Some people, including a few Christians, embraced socialism, although most repudiated its anti-religious bias.
- D. Some Christians redefined the notion of "kingdom of God" in ethical terms.

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V. The Social Gospel

The Social Gospel was an ethical movement in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century American Protestantism. It is often identified with theological liberalism and social justice.

- A. Washington Gladden (1836-1918) was a Congregationalist minister and early exponent of the Social Gospel. He published *Working People and Their Employers* (1876), an appeal for fairness to workers.
- B. Charles Sheldon (1857-1946) was a clergyman from Topeka, Kansas, whose best-selling novel *In His Steps* (1897) encouraged Christians to ask themselves “What would Jesus do?” in every decision.
- C. The most important exponent of the Social Gospel was Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), who ministered for ten years in New York City’s “Hell’s Kitchen.” He was influenced by the socialist Henry George (1839-97), but his main concern was to find within the Scriptures answers to the problems of industrial society. In 1907 Rauschenbusch published *Christianity and the Social Crisis*. This was followed by *Prayers of the Social Awakening* (1910), *Christianizing the Social Order* (1912), and *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917).

VI. Roman Catholicism and the City

Roman Catholics began to deal constructively with urban, industrial society in the 1880s. Some Catholic leaders were influenced by the socialist Henry George; however, the Vatican banned *Progress and Poverty* in 1889. Leo XIII’s encyclical *Rerum Novarum* or “Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor (1891) brought into the church a new attitude toward labor questions. This open letter addressed the conditions of the working classes.

VII. Other Social Issues

- A. Reconstruction
- B. Immigration
- C. Rural Discontent
- D. Temperance and Sabbath Observance
- E. Manifest Destiny