

THE MISSIONARY MOVEMENT OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY
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For practical reasons in this essay we are going to start in 1793, the date when William Carey arrived in India, and continue to the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference (1910). In such a short essay we will have to just skim the surface. Rather than describe each missionary effort we briefly describe some main events in key world areas, look at the effect of religious revivals on mission, illustrate the different models that were developed, the general effect of missions on society, and point out the things that can be learned from this century of reaching out to the world with the message of the gospel.

I. Mission after the Protestant Reformation

By the end of the seventeenth century the German Lutheran Church spent much time in intellectual theological discussions which were subject matter for long and often boring discourses that were preached from the pulpits. The warm lively heart faith of Luther had been replaced by cold intellectual pursuits. The priesthood of all believers had been sabotaged by autocratic Lutheran pastors.

It was to this stage that two important actors played a pivotal role in bringing renewed life to the church and in stimulating the beginning of the protestant missionary movement. Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705), appealed for moral reform in the city. He introduced the idea of members meeting in small groups on Wednesdays and Sundays to pray, to discuss the previous week's sermon, and to apply passages from Scripture and devotional writings to individual lives. These groups are the forerunners of John Wesley's "classes and bands".

Spener emphasized the need for individual conversion, for a devotional walk with the Lord on a daily basis. The Bible became a book to be obeyed in practical terms. What followed was a renewed focus on holy living, spreading the gospel, and providing for the needy.

August Hermann Francke (1663-1677) founded the University of Halle a Pietist center where classes were taught based on the conception that Christianity had to take into account a change of heart and consequent holiness of life and not just doctrinal correctness. Francke's missionary influence was felt directly through missionaries who went from Halle to foreign

fields (the Danish-Halle mission). The University of Halle established a center for Oriental languages and also encouraged efforts at translating the Bible into new languages.

Nicolas Von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), studied at the Halle University and later organized the Moravian Church. This group of 300 Bohemian refugees who lived on Count Zinzendorf's lands in Herrnhut, East Germany, was visited by God in a mighty revival in 1727 after which they decided to go to the neediest people of the world to tell them about Jesus thus pioneering the great protestant missionary enterprise. During the next 30 years hundreds of missionary volunteers left Herrnhut to serve God in many different countries in the Caribbean, North and South America, the Arctic, Africa, and the Far East. A group in Herrnhut prayed continuously for missions 24 hours a day, for 100 years. They were also first to send "lay" people to serve as missionaries.

II. The context of the nineteenth century

With the tumultuous years of 1789-1815, European culture was transformed by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. With the victory over Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815, Britain became the new imperial power, replacing France, Spain and Portugal. Between 1815 and 1914, around 10,000,000 square miles of territory and roughly 400 million people were added to the British Empire. Britain with its steamships "ruled the waves". In the middle of the 19th century Britain was the richest and most powerful nation in the world. The British colonial expansion facilitated Protestant Christian mission although with some ambivalences.

Colonialism, commerce and Christianity

During this century western nations including the new American nation built on the idea of their "manifest destiny." The West believed that they were the chosen people and they were to rule over other nations. Although this was never their primary purpose, missionaries also sometimes became agents of western imperialism. As William Carey discovered when he arrived in India, the East India Company did not approve of missionaries because it interfered with commercial interests.¹ In 1813, after a resounding speech in the House of Commons in support of missionary work in the colonies by William Wilberforce (1759-1833), permission was given.

¹ P. Hutchinson & W. E. Garrison (2004). *20 Centuries of Christianity*. Harcourt ,USA: Brace and Company, p. 279)

Through the indefatigable lobbying of the Clapham fraternity, traffic in slaves became illegal in 1807 and slavery was abolished in British colonies in 1834 although within Africa there still were many slavers. David Livingstone (1813-1873) maintained that one of his primary aims was to stamp out the slave trade and one way to do this was to introduce other areas of trade so that ‘commerce and Christianity’ could reinforce one another. While the colonial governments traded, the missionaries evangelized and trained and educated leaders for government service.

III. The missionary work in different world areas

Mission in India, “the jewel of the crown”

British officials poured into India to keep control of its valuable raw materials, especially tea, cotton and poppies for opium which was exported to China. They expanded production, built factories in India, and built huge railroad, irrigation, and telegraph systems.

When William Carey arrived in Calcutta India in 1793, it marked a major milestone in the history of Christian missions and in the history of India. After passing some really hard times in which one of his young sons died and his wife Dorothy Carey suffered a mental collapse, Carey was successful in establishing the Baptist work in Serampore, a small Danish colony in India. Carey had a real gift for languages and translated the Bible into Bengali, Sanskrit, and many other major languages and dialects. With the arrival of Joshua Marshman, a teacher, and William Ward a printer, Carey was able to achieve his vision of setting up schools as well as translating and publishing the scriptures into the language of the people.

By founding the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) he is the pioneer of the modern missionary society, with a base in the home country which supports missionaries on the field. He set a pattern of Bible Translation, education, medical work, church planting which inspired a remarkable upsurge in missionary vision which resulted in the commencement of new denominational missionary societies who began to send hundreds of missionaries to the diverse places of the Globe.

Mission in China “the sleeping Giant”

With the Treaty of Nanking (1842) China opened four ports to Britain. European and American missions responded immediately to the new freedom for missionary enterprise. By 1865 there were already thirty different Protestant groups at work in China.

In 1854 Hudson Taylor a young medical student from England, arrived in Shanghai with a clear call to do missionary work in the interior of that great nation. He preferred to adopt the Chinese way of dress, learnt the local dialects, and distanced himself from the more paternalistic style of mission carried out by established missions in China along the coast. He decided to live without the guarantee of material support trusting God for his resources and for over fifty years God proved His faithfulness to him. With the recruitment of the first group of volunteers, the first “faith Mission,” the China Inland Mission was officially set up in 1865 under the direction of Hudson Taylor and William Thomas Berger. The missionaries could come from different denominational backgrounds to work together for the church in China. Most faith missionaries are not financially supported by denominations. By the time of his death, Hudson Taylor had accomplished bringing over 800 missionaries to China. In 1907, one hundred years after Morrison’s arrival there were around five thousand missionaries representing eighty-six societies at work in China.

Mission in Africa, “the dark continent” or the “white man’s grave”

For the first part of the century Africa remained “the unknown and mysterious continent.”² Africa was called the “Dark Continent,” which had not been enlightened by the light of Western civilization. The discovery of quinine (1820) to ease the symptoms of malaria heralded an age of Western exploration in Africa. Many Christian missionaries went to Africa the most famous being Dr. David Livingstone who went as a missionary doctor and pioneer in 1838. His books about his experiences stimulated great interest in Africa. In the second half of the century many inroads were made to the interior of this great continent and towards the end of the century the colonial powers began mapping out their colonies in Africa. By 1900, only Liberia and Ethiopia were free of European control.

Mission in Latin America “The forgotten continent”

After independence from Spain at first the new liberal governments were sympathetic to Protestants, but the more orthodox Catholic clergy reacted and restrictions were resumed. In many of the major cities Anglican churches were set up only for the expatriate population.

² Neill , op. cit., p.305

There were attempts to work among indigenous people. The South American Missionary Society (SAMS) was founded at Brighton in 1844 as the Patagonian Mission. The strategy they chose was to work with indigenous people in Tierra del Fuego. Moravian presence in Nicaragua dates back to 1847, when German Moravian missionaries started work in Bluefields on the Atlantic Coast. The Moravians worked among the Afro-Caribbeans, and Miskito, Sumu and Rama Indians on the Caribbean coast.

By the beginning of the twentieth century Protestant work had been established in all of the Latin American countries but with very small beginnings. Although discussion about Latin America was largely ignored at the Edinburgh World Mission Conference of 1910, the next century was to see exponential growth of the Evangelical church.

Mission in the Middle East and Muslim lands

Muslim lands have tended to be neglected in Christian Mission. Missionaries were present in small numbers in many countries, the most successful chapter being Lebanon where the Bible was translated into Arabic in 1846. In 1866 American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, started the American University of Beirut. Today many Lebanese people consider themselves Christians.

IV. Theology and praxis of nineteenth century Christian mission

It was during this century that the models for protestant/evangelical missionary work were established. The Moravians had established the paradigm for volunteerism. They were mostly lay people who went to different countries to earn their own living in the trade that they had experience in. In this section we will consider some of the theological frameworks for mission developed in this century.

God is a missionary God

First we must acknowledge that God is a missionary God and He was primary at work rising up a people for himself from the tribes of the world. Men and women were touched by God, empowered by His spirit and motivated to go to the ends of the Earth to tell people about a God who is love. They knew that very probably there would be difficulties and for many disease and death, but they were constrained by love and thousands of missionaries responded to the call.

Revivals stimulate mission

The first Great Evangelical Awakening of the eighteenth century started in Herrnhut in 1727 which as we have seen gave birth to a truly noble group of volunteer missionaries. In 1735 revival broke out in Massachusetts under the ministry of Jonathan Edwards and in 1738 the revival started in Great Britain under the influence of George Whitefield and the Wesley brothers. These revivals brought new life to the churches, thousands of people accepted Christ, and they opened the way for lay people to get involved. The revivals stimulated missionary work and also humanitarian efforts of different kinds.

The Second Evangelical Awakening according to Edwin Orr occurred between 1792 and 1820.³ This revival mainly affected the United States and Great Britain. It was at this time that the evangelical Anglicans whose most famous representatives are probably the Clapham Sect began to influence the Anglican churches. There was a revival in the University of Yale in 1802. Other colleges soon followed. In Williams College Samuel John Mills formed their famous resolution in the “haystack prayer meeting” to commit themselves to missionary work abroad. In 1810 the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was formed and in 1812 the first missionaries set sail for India.⁴ Davies says that “the modern Protestant missionary movement began as a direct result of the second evangelical revival.”⁵

The third Evangelical Awakening took place in the middle of the century from 1857 to 1859.⁶ The revival started in America and spread to Great Britain. In the United States, Davies says that “within two years over a million people had been added to the churches at the rate of 10,000 each week”.⁷ “The missionary movement received an injection of new candidates”.⁸

The fourth Great Evangelical Awakening started in Wales in 1904 and spread around the globe deeply affecting missionary endeavors and birthing the Pentecostal church and other denominations in the holiness tradition such as the Church of the Nazarene. In conclusion, we

³ Davies Ron E (1992) *I Will Pour Out my Spirit: a History and Theology of Revivals and Evangelical Awakenings*. Great Britain: Monarch Books, p. 9.

⁴ Ibid p.121

⁵ Ibid p. 133

⁶ Ibid p.150

⁷ Ibid p.154

⁸ Davies, op.cit., p.163

have to say that, when God revives his church she is given a renewed vision to reach the lost in the four corners of the globe.

Christianity is translatable globally

The first task of many Protestants was to learn the language and put the Scriptures into the language of the people they were serving. As Neill says: “No language has been found in which it was impossible to communicate the gospel.”⁹ The Bible Society was founded in 1804 to provide cheap editions of the Bible in different languages as well as colporteurs to distribute them.

A new paradigm of organization: The society model

William Carey founded the Baptist Missionary Society (1793) as a Protestant tool for doing mission borrowed from the company model used in commerce with a board of directors in the home land who looked for and processed new volunteers and received and administered the funds needed by the missionaries on the field. Alongside the trained clergy the missions accepted families, lay people and single women. The Protestant missionaries were financed by voluntary donations and only advanced by the power of prayer and persuasion. A series of denominational missionary societies were founded within a few years.

Interdenominational faith missions

With the founding of the China Inland Mission (CIM) by Hudson Taylor in 1865 a new paradigm was established, the faith missions. The mission was to be interdenominational. Volunteers could come from different churches as long as they were sincere Christians and could sign a simple declaration of faith. CIM insisted on radical volunteerism going to the mission field with no financial guarantee. People of all walks of life were welcome, the highly educated as well as people with practical skills as long as they had a sincere call. The direction of the mission would be in China not in England. Missionaries would have to wear the national dress of the Chinese in order to be a part of the Chinese community. The primary aim of the mission was widespread evangelism in the interior provinces of China. Less emphasis would be placed on institutions or missionaries pastoring churches.¹⁰

⁹ Neill, op. cit., p. 253

¹⁰ Neill, op.cit., pp. 333-334

Indigenous church mission theory and the “three self formula”

Henry Venn (1796-1873), an Anglican priest and Rufus Anderson (1796-1880) an American Congregationalist minister simultaneously developed a strategy to respond to some of the paternalistic practices of some western missionaries early in the 19th century. They both argued for churches on the mission field that were able to govern themselves, propagate themselves and support themselves. According to this program the role of the missionary was always to train nationals and “work himself out of a job” stimulating indigenous church growth and leadership. “Underlying this theory was a deep respect and trust of indigenous peoples, an attitude that unfortunately was to diminish in the... more imperialistic stage of the nineteenth century”.¹¹

John Livingstone Nevius (1829-1893) served as a Presbyterian missionary to China in the late 1800s. Nevius visited Korea and shared his ideas with the church there. Many of these principles were applied in 1890 to the work in Korea. Nevius stipulated that each Korean Christian should support himself with the trade he was accustomed to; The Church should be developed in Korea only as far as the nationals were able to be responsible for it; the national church should call out leaders who they feel were suitable and the churches were to be built in the native style by the Koreans with their own resources.¹²

Roland Allen (1868-1947) also attempted to apply indigenous church principles to the missions of his day. After serving as an Anglican missionary in China from 1895 to 1903, he returned to England and spent 40 years writing about missions principles.¹³ Allen taught that God’s Spirit was at work in the churches and that there should be a spontaneous expansion of the church as in the case of St Paul during his missionary journeys.

Postmillennial theology and positivism

The enlightenment had given birth to a dream of development and progress which science and education was about to usher in. With more missionaries serving in all the corners of the Globe the church began to believe that the world would be converted and that this would usher in

¹¹ Bevans & Schroeder, op.cit., p. 213.

¹² Neill, op.cit. p.343

¹³ Roland Allen (1912). *Missionary methods : St. Paul's or ours. A study of the church in the four provinces*, London : R. Scott.

the millennial reign of God in earth, through the church. This made missionary work more urgent.

The birth of the science of missiology

Gustav Warneck (1834-1910), professor of the Halle University is the founder of Protestant missionary science. He produced a three volume work on Protestant mission theory and he surveyed the history of Protestant missionary work. Warneck emphasized the need for putting down roots, developing the national church, for a more holistic mission and criticized superficial high speed efforts which could be easily quantified but did not necessarily bring lasting growth.¹⁴

Missionary methods and styles

The nineteenth century missionaries carried out holistic mission: preaching, teaching, healing and working in development projects. Standing on the shoulders of the Protestant Reformation one of the urgent first steps was translation of the Bible and getting it printed and into the hands of the people. In order for them to read it some schools were set up which included lessons from western education. Some of these schools progressed to become important centers of learning like the College in Serampore and the American University in Beirut.

Missionaries tended to live in compounds or mission stations. This had the advantage of fellowship and mutual support although often living in close quarters produced conflict. One disadvantage of this system was that missionaries did not live among the nationals and this hindered their total incarnation in society. Many medical centers and agricultural farm institutions served the people. Sometimes missionaries fought for human rights.

The place of women in missions

Women played an important role in missions. The strongly evangelical London Missionary Society (LMS) and Church Missionary Society (CMS) were the first societies explicitly to enlist the aid of women. One of the best known single lady missionaries was the Scottish Mary Slessor (1848–1915) who served God for nearly forty years in Calabar, Nigeria.

¹⁴ S. Moreau (ed.) (2000) *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. Article “Gustav Warneck” by Klaus Fiedler, p. 2006. See also J. Verkuyl (1978) *Contemporary Missiology. An Introduction*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans Publishing House, pp.26-28.

By 1900 women often outnumbered men who were serving with faith missions to a ratio of three to one.¹⁵

V. *An evaluation of achievements at the “close” of the century: The Edinburgh World Missionary Conference 1910*

In 1910, more than 1,200 representatives of missionary societies came together from all over the world to Edinburgh under the motto: “the evangelization of the world in this generation.” Warneck objected to the slogan and “pointed out that the missionary command “bids us ‘go’ into the world, not ‘fly’” and that Jesus likened God’s kingdom to a farmer’s field not to a hothouse”¹⁶.

They rejoiced in Edinburgh because twelve important advances had been achieved in Christian mission:-

1. Although some countries like Afghanistan and Tibet were still closed to Christianity missionaries had been able to enter the entire known world.
2. A lot of the pioneer work had been carried out. Languages had been learned and reduced to writing and the most important languages of the world had received the at least the New Testament.
3. Due to the fact that medicine had resolved most of the tropical diseases, the missionaries could stay longer in each country.
4. People had been converted to Christianity from every major religion of the world.
5. Although some were more open than others no groups of people had been found who could not understand the gospel.
6. The missionary now was accompanied by national leaders.
7. The younger churches were beginning to produce leaders of great intellectual and spiritual stature.
8. The home churches were more engaged in supporting the missionaries.
9. Financial support had kept pace with the rapid expansion of missionary endeavor.
10. The universities in the West were producing graduates with a high potential for missionary work.
11. The influence of the gospel was wider than just the groups of people who had accepted it.
12. Opposition to the gospel seemed to be on the wane in countries like China and Japan.¹⁷

Andrew Walls says of the conference:

¹⁵ D. Roberts (1996) *American Women in Mission: The Modern Mission Era 1792-1992*. USA: Mercer University Press, p. 191, in Bevens and Schroeder, op.cit.

¹⁶ Hutchinson William (1987). *Errand to the World American Protestant Missionary thought and Foreign Missions*. Chicago: University of Chicago press, p.131, quoted in Bosch, op cit.

¹⁷ Ibid. pp.394-395

The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, has passed into Christian legend. It was a landmark in the history of mission; the starting point of the modern theology of mission; the high point of the Western missionary movement and the point from which it declined; the Launchpad of the modern ecumenical movement; the point at which Christians first began to glimpse something of what a world church would be like.¹⁸

The missionaries in Edinburgh saw themselves at the threshold of something new. In fact however, Edinburgh marks the end of an epoch. From the battle of Waterloo 1815 to the First World War in 1914 the world had been at peace. The First World War heralded difficult times for Christian Mission, including a serious economic depression, a second major war and the Marxist and Maoist regimes which shut their doors to Christianity. However God's call to men and women has been heard and the church globally is being built up and strengthened from day to day.

Conclusions

There are some lessons that missions need to learn for today. Both pietism and the great evangelical revivals played crucial roles. We need to take a good look at the holistic mission carried out in the different parts of the globe 200 years ago and ask ourselves if Gustav Warneck does not have a good point: quality comes before quantity. Communicating the message of love of Jesus to a hurting world, building churches, developing leaders takes time and success cannot be measured in numbers but only by time.

Contemporary missionaries, often from Third World countries, need to be aware of their own racial prejudices and ethnocentricities so that they do not get in the way of the work.

Even in the nineteenth century missionary work among Muslims was hard. Tibet and Afghanistan continue to be difficult mission fields although some advances have been made.

Building on the theories of Rufus and Venn, David Bosch suggests a fourth "self" in his section of indigenization¹⁹. Each world area/country has the right to develop autochthonous theology. What would an Indian, Latin American or African holiness movement look like? Is each area of the world free in the Nazarene setting to express itself theologically?

¹⁸ Andrew Walls (2001) "From Christendom to world Christianity: Missions and the demographic transformation of the church" *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, Vol.22, No.3: 306-330 (p. 310)

¹⁹ Bosch, op.cit pp.441-452

There is a need for a new generation of God touched, fearless, gifted men and women who are really willing to give up everything and follow the Master to the ends of the Earth even if it means sacrificing their lives for Him. “Mission” concludes Bosch, “is the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus...It is the good news of God’s love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world.”²⁰

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²⁰ Bosch, op.cit., p. 519.

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