

REVIVAL AND HOLINESS MOVEMENT IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY  
A LATIN-AMERICAN PERCEPTION

Dr. Federico Meléndez Mariano Galvez University (MAR)

1. The religious revival in the nineteenth century in the United States of America: industrialization, urban poverty and mission.
2. Towards a new revival. The globalization of poverty and the challenge to the church. Towards a North-South dialogue in the Americas.

*Summary*

This paper seeks to interpret religious revival in the light of the social situation in which the religious revival was born in the context of the United States of America. It refers to the development of the industrial leadership of the United States and how they became a middle-class nation, seeking to meet the challenge of poverty implied in the transition from an agricultural to an industrial society and the role that the evangelical church performed in that transition.

In light of this model, the essay seeks to explain the phenomenon of globalization of the new post-industrial society, especially its economic effects on poor countries in Latin America, and the corresponding role the church has to play in the face of the globalization of poverty; and the dialogue, cooperation and mutual responsibility that is involved in dealing with the challenge of a distorted capitalist economy changing it into an economy that United Nations has declared as sustainable.

This essay is a contribution to holistic mission and social ethics from the perspective of a theology of love.

*The revival and holiness movement in the nineteenth century in the United States of America: a Latin-American perception.*

1. *Brief political history and industrialization of the nineteenth century in the United States of America.*

The economic growth of the United States of America and its influence on the global economy always causes admiration of the other countries of the world, particularly the Latin American nations. The United States remains the world's superpower in almost all fronts, including the economic. Its solid economic and political model of democracy is an inspiration to many emerging countries.

The influence of the United States of America on Latin American countries swings from the imitation of democracy, culture and values, to rejection by countries that do not share their values and lifestyle.

How did the United States become the superpower it is now, and above all, how was the beginning of their political experience and the process of industrialization? These questions are answered in the following brief historical summary.

For students of the history of the United States, the secret of its hegemony is rooted in its political past and the forces that shaped it as an economic power. Originally, Britain was the queen of nations in global trade, because it was the first nation to control the industrial revolution of the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth century.

At this point, it is necessary to consider the differences in the origin of the nations of Latin America, and the United States of America. Spain commenced the process of the conquest of the Americas, after consolidating the religious project of their Catholic empire, with the expulsion of the Arabs in Spain. Spain was a religious power, and eager to steer the European economy. The Spaniard who came to the Americas was an adventurer, forged in the ideological war of the expulsion of the Arab conquest and eager to make easy money.

Britain on the other hand, had a different religious and cultural approach. Religious divisions in England were also political divisions. Many British immigrants moved to America in search of religious freedom and to promote their own political freedom. Most Englishmen who came to the future United States of America did so for religious and political freedom. British Puritans represented the vast majority of the early immigrants to Massachusetts, where many settled. This would mark the political and religious history of the United States, and very pronounced differences in the genesis of the origin of our nations.

In part, these differences explain the reason why the industrial revolution was installed and consolidated in the United States during the nineteenth century. The Industrial Revolution itself began in the eighteenth century in the British context; and from there industrialization spread to other countries in Europe. It was through the enterprising spirit of the early settlers, that it arrived to the United States.

The northern states, originally the first thirteen colonies, including what are now the states of Massachusetts, Maryland, the Carolinas and Virginia, among others, were the first to establish a predominantly Anglo-Saxon population.

Unlike European countries with a long tradition in aristocratic and feudal system of land development, and competition with other nations, the United States in the beginning

confronted other problems such as: the colonization of the land and its enormous size, the annexation of its different states, immigration, and the great problem of slavery.

Originally the United States were divided into two cultural fronts. The northern states were mostly urban, educated, and with a greater democratic and industrialized processes. The southern states, however, were mostly rural dedicated mostly to the cotton industry.

When civil war erupted under President Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), promoted by the northern states by the newly created Republican Party, Lincoln declared himself as a strong opponent of slavery. Slavery was strongly defended by the southern states, because they depended on slave labor for cotton production. Southern states declared themselves independent forming their own confederation which resulted in a bloody civil war between the states. After the fierce civil war (1861-1865) between the states of North and South, Lincoln finally restored the desired American union, and the federal government was strengthened among all states. The expansion westward became more relevant.

With regard to the industrialization process, the difference from the British model of industrial development was felt quickly, because while Britain expanded its global trade by sea, the United States expanded their trade within the country itself.

Because of its large size, the United States did not need foreign trade, and concentrated on expanding its trade within the states themselves, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. In this case the vehicle was not boats, but the railways: "As part of the legacy of the Civil War, the federal government granted large tracts of land to people who promised to build the national railway system. The Northern Pacific received 17 million hectares, 10 million Southern Pacific and the Union Pacific, eight million. In the end, America was joined 'from one shining sea to the other' "(McCann, 1978, p.8).

The industrialization of all the states was swift, and the development of the railways, along with the growth of the iron industry, and many other industries, began to transform the political and economic power of the nation.

In *Civilization Past and Present*, a summarized comprehensive history of the world, by Walter Walkbank, Nels Bailkey and Alastair Taylor (1972), we find that between 1850 and 1900, the United States became the most powerful state in the Western Hemisphere. There was an increase in Gross Domestic Product of seven billion to 88 billion dollars; they had established an excellent system of public education, and there was a push for civil liberties. However, there were also many other factors that overshadowed these

achievements, such as the growth of cities, unemployment, poor health and urban poverty and crime in the cities.

The thirst for expansion and colonization of the lands of the western states finally managed to integrate the major states in the union. Some were bought, as the purchase and the acquisition of Louisiana from the French government, and the states of Texas and California were taken from the government of Mexico. The territorial expansion had come to an end, and the consolidation of the federal government of the United States with headquarters in Washington, with its own autonomous states had been achieved.

The voice of the church was immediate in expressing itself in the long process of integration of the states, and slavery debate on racial, social and economic grounds, as well as the introduction of the church in the current social issues and critique of the system of urban poverty and pointing to the new rich and magnates of industrialization: " As a result of the rapid expansion, the main distinguishing feature of American religion after 1865, was the concern with social issues such as poverty, workers' rights, the liquor traffic, poor housing and racial discrimination" (Smith, 1980, p. 148).

## *2. Religious Context of the nineteenth century: industrialization, urban poverty and mission.*

As stated at the beginning of this paper, the difference between the Latin American poor, or so-called developing countries, and the United States of America, was evident from their beginnings as nations. In first place, as already indicated, Spain dominated Europe during the sixteenth and part of the seventeenth century, thanks to the powerful process of mercantilism sponsored by the riches of the Americas, and the enormous power of the Medieval Catholic Church.

Medieval Catholic Spain was imposed by force in the conquered lands. Whereas protestant settlers who were mostly British immigrants, went in search of a better life, seeking their own religious freedom and new development opportunities in the new lands of America.

The British shaped by a Protestant work ethics, and a manifest destiny as God's elect, sought how to make money working hard; the Spanish for their part wanted to share the profits gained through the conquest. The die was cast by the British and Spanish from Europe and the metamorphosis of the nations of North America and Latin America was conceived.

Over the centuries, these two conceptions shaped the destiny of the peoples of the Americas, on the one hand, in a relatively short time, the British colonists established in the United States achieved their political and economic independence from Great Britain, while on the other hand, the independence of Latin American countries of Spain came much later.

This single gesture shows how both peoples evolved differently. However the problem of black slaves overshadowed the cultural history of the United States, just as many of the Indians of the Americas were wiped out by the Spanish.

For the purposes of economic analysis and its influence on Protestantism it is important to highlight the fact that in the nineteenth century, the wealth of the new nation consolidated the religious organization of the different denominations, as expressed by William Sweet, (1979) an expert on the subject of the religious history.

The most significant influence on the religious organization in the United States by the year 1880 until the end of the century and beyond was the tremendous increase in wealth in the nation. This influence was manifested on all American churches in different ways. Firstly, the pleasantness and comfort provided by wealth made it possible very quickly to extinguish the realities of the harshness of the religion that was typical of the stage of development of Border States. The wooden houses led to better and more comfortable houses of worship, and thus the church members would not have to worship any more in uncomfortable and unpleasant places; an era of building churches was the natural result (p.345).

As well as influencing the lives of the different religious denominations in the mid and late nineteenth century the new social and economic environment, produced another social class with great influence on the life of the church: the new tycoons of the industrial revolution. McCann, (1978) says:

The United States idealized businessman who could consolidate a vast business empire: the business tycoon. This occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century. It began with the proliferation of rail network in the 1850s and included the growth of northern industry in 1860, and the rise of investment banking in 1870. During this period, commercial interests had a powerful influence on the government ... J. Pierpont Morgan, perhaps the most flamboyant entrepreneurs, exhibited great magnificence. He and his colleagues liked betting, sailing in yachts, held lavish parties, built palatial mansions and bought the art treasures of Europe. In contrast, men like John D. Rockefeller and Henry Ford showed austere Puritan qualities. As a devout and religious people, they had a sense of responsibility for others (p.11).

William Sweet mentions the fact that among the "Christian magnates" the most significant for the church were, Cyrus H. McCormick, Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, among others. These magnates gave religious organizations of the time great leadership, which led to them being seen more as corporations than churches:

Many of the men in the creation of these large companies were also faithful members of churches ... Through his long life John D. Rockefeller was a devout Baptist and also considered himself to be a servant of God and wealth as "gold of God." He once told a Baptist friend that he did not know how good a Christian he was, but knew he was a good Baptist (Sweet, 1979, p.348).

The advocates of a new social order based on the social teachings of Jesus and the Holiness Movement, which protected the interests of the poor, and the growth in wealth among church members were tensions experienced by the churches until the early twentieth century

Experts say that it was during the first decades of the twentieth century that the churches began to abandon their commitment to the poor, and formed the new cultural North American affluent pattern. Tom Nees, a Nazarene leader says in his book *Compassion Evangelism* (1996):

Halfway through twentieth century this branch of the church in the United States had abandoned all its commitment to serve the population in need. The prevailing attitude, or the theology of the time, reduced the role of the church to the spiritual.

Social activism was suspected to be the work of liberal Christianity, which it was argued, had replaced authentic evangelism ... And as stated by Richard Niebuhr, a theology of affluence flourished between the second and third generations of those whose parents had been members of the most disinherited evangelical groups. Churches that before had welcomed and included the low income groups in urban areas, in a generation felt that their wealth was a result or evidence of God's blessings. The division within American Christianity was nearly complete by the 1920s (p.14).

### 3. *Towards a new revival: globalization of the Gospel and the challenge of poverty, in a North-South dialogue in the Americas.*

If the nineteenth century was the century of the nascent Industrial Revolution in the United States, and with this the consolidation of capitalism and the new urban social classes, it was also the century of urban poverty and the birth of the struggles and demands of urban workers. The Holiness Movement must be seen in light of these social phenomena and social gospel teachings.

In addition to these phenomena at the turn of the century, it was also a time of prosperity for religious organizations, and with this the international expansion through international agency missions. As a result, *the protestant church with North American roots* grew in Latin America in the light of the missions in the late nineteenth century, in part by the ability of politicians and rulers of the time, who opened the door to American Protestants to give new life to the North American neo-colonial expansion. The aim was to refresh the

religious environment of the influences of the Catholic Church. This policy marked the origin and development of Latin American Protestantism until well into the twentieth century.

Now, in the XXI century under the rise of economic globalization and the new faces of international trade, the world has become a global economy, and capitalism is no longer just the tool of countries like the United States and Europe to extend themselves to all parts of the world. Latin America was included in the influence of the global markets of the United States, and free trade agreements have expanded throughout the region.

Today, more than a century since the Holiness Movement arose in the United States, and left its mark among the poorest of the new industrial revolution in that country, and the racial struggle between black and white, we find Latin America divided between the poverty of the great majority and wealth of the small ruling elites, in a similar way to what happened in the United States of America in the nineteenth century.

Unlike the United States, the Industrial Revolution came later to Latin America and only as cheap labor for the North American corporations that exploited our soil. For the twentieth century, whole countries were incorporated as subsistence economies in contrast to the enormous economic power of the United States. Political models of military dictatorships were established throughout most of the twentieth century, and democracy as a political system is still incipient.

Globalization has been established, but it has not brought the great benefits that were announced. Poverty continues to grow, but according to experts, Latin America is the Continent with most social inequality. Bernardo Kliksberg, as Argentine expert on Latin American social ethics issues, says in his book *More Ethics, More Development*, (2004), that we are a continent of paradoxes:

At the beginning of the twenty-first century Latin America presents a picture of what might be called a "poverty paradox". The high rates of poverty (44% poverty, 19% of extreme poverty ECLAC, 2003) do not correspond to the privileged amount of natural resources and not even with the levels of the Gross Domestic Product and the GDP per capita. This is the paradox of widespread poverty amidst wealth potential. Let us look at the case of the three major economies of the region. Brazil is ranked number eight in the world in Annual Domestic Product and 58<sup>th</sup> in Domestic Product per capita. However instead, in terms of life expectancy and literacy it ranks number 108<sup>th</sup> and 113<sup>th</sup> in infant mortality. Mexico is the twelfth largest economy in Gross Domestic Product and 57<sup>th</sup> in Domestic Product per capita, but ranks 64<sup>th</sup> in life expectancy, 92<sup>nd</sup> in illiteracy 108<sup>th</sup> in infant mortality. Argentina is one of the major global suppliers of food. It is among the top five countries in the world in production and exports a long series of basic foods such as soy, wheat, meat and others. In 2002, it exported foods that could supply 330 million people. Its population is only 37 million.

However, 1 in 5 children in Greater Buenos Aires have problems of malnutrition and the rate is even higher in some of the poorer Northern provinces (p.9).

If the revival and Holiness Movement were focused among the poorest population in the emerging industrial society of the United States of America, today, the church in Latin America as a Continent paradoxically also moves in the same tensions that the United States experienced a century ago, in other words, in the alternative of becoming a church that does not abandon its mission to the poor, or a church that is accommodated to the current economic system.

An example of the later can be found in the Theology of Prosperity that has wreaked havoc to justify the wealth of the few and has plunged millions of poor into false hopes through teaching them the false statement that if they becomes Christians they will automatically prosper economically.

Today Latin American Christians, heirs to the tradition of holiness need to learn from the religious history of the United States. We cannot afford to consider ourselves rich, when in fact paradoxical poverty is a constant throughout the Continent, despite the rise of emerging countries such as Mexico, Chile and Brazil.

What lessons can Latin Americans learn from the religious history of the United States of America? How do we interpret the history of the religious Holiness Movements of the nineteenth century? I present some thoughts for further discussion:

**Firstly**, as cultures we must not adjust to the socio-economic models of globalization, or to any other political or economic model, as happened with the church in the United States. Globalization with its emphasis on wealth, individualism and consumer markets has degraded the image of God to the human being that is purely material. This is true both in poor countries as in rich countries.

**In second place**, even if human systems are required by the global economy and its agencies, such as the recipes of powerful countries given to poor economies, the church has to be critical of ideological systems, both economic and political. They should look for alternatives and support new economic approaches that drive the dignity of human beings, especially of the poor, instead of the imposition of capital. The so-called economy with a human face or of sustainability could be an alternative.

**Thirdly**, the imposition of capital has led us to environmental degradation and destruction of nature through the voracious greed of many local wealthy people, and many

corporations who only seek to enrich their estates, without bringing hardly any benefit to the poorest communities. We must react and be analytical.

**In fourth place**, the traditional theology of holiness, as in the nineteenth century with the social gospel, must regain consciously the message of the holistic salvation and the presence of structural social sin. The Church's Ministry of Compassion is a comprehensive approach that the Nazarene church established from the early nineteen eighties. Compassion is not just a ministry to be organized; it has to be the blood of the whole denomination. In Latin America, we need to strengthen and enrich our compassionate outreach rather than to degrade or eliminate it.

**Fifthly**, while it is true that globalization is here to stay, and countries that are not incorporated into the world economy cannot survive, we must remember the damage it brought to the life of the church in the United States. The church succumbed to riches when it came knocking on their door, and forgot their humble roots and neglected the poorest of society for many years.

**In sixth place**, while it is true that our countries must evolve in education, health and decent work for social advancement, we cannot forget that we come from poor homes; we need to see how we can promote change in the middle and professional classes encouraging them to serve the interests of the poor, the marginalized and those who are excluded from society. We should not fall into the temptation of building ostentatious buildings, but those which are practical and simple where everyone, rich and poor can be a family together.

I conclude with more questions than answers for Latin American perceptions about the Holiness Movement in the United States of America in the nineteenth century: Can we Latin Americans learn from the religious history of the United States? How do we face our own poverty paradox?

We pray to God that these conferences do not just remain as documents in a file, but that in each country or region will follow up with its own ideas and joint projects.

*The Nazarenes can and must do this with urgency.*

#### *List of References*

- Cook Franklin y Steve Weber, (1991). *Cuando Florece el Amor, la historia de los ministerios de compasión*, Kansas City, Mo. Casa Nazarena de Publicaciones.
- McCan Robert, Mark Perlman, (1978). *Reseña de la economía de los Estados Unidos, Servicio informativo y cultural de los Estados Unidos de América* Agencia de Comunicación Internacional de los Estados Unidos de América.

- Nees Thomas (1996). *Compassion Evangelism, meeting Human needs*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press.
- Kliksberg Bernardo (2004). *Más ética, más desarrollo*, Buenos Aires: Argentina, temas, grupo editorial SRL
- Padilla Rene (2002). *Economía Humana y economía del Reino de Dios, con un ensayo sobre la crisis argentina en el marco de la globalización*. Buenos Aires: Kairos.
- Smith Harold Ivan (1983). *The Quotable Bresee*, (compilation). Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press.
- Smith, Timothy (1980). *Revivalism and Social Reform, American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Sweet William (1979). *The Story of Religion in America*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House (third edition).
- Schroeder Richard (1978). *Reseña del Gobierno de los Estados Unidos*. Washington: servicio informativo y Cultural de los Estados Unidos de América, Agencia de comunicación internacional de los Estados Unidos de América.
- Wallbank Taylor y Bailkey (1972). *Civilization past and present*, (fourth edition). Glenview Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company.