

## The Evangelical Renaissance, 1600 - 2000 AD

Lesson 14: Wednesday, March 22, 2006

Ralph D. Winter

W1414

In this final 400-year period we can notice the acceleration of history as never before. While this lesson covers merely the fifth expansion, two things are true: 1) more things happened in this period than any other, and furthermore, 2) events that did happen are 100 times as likely to be recalled, recorded and reported, and reported accurately.

Our next lessons will deal with incidents and events occurring in the period, but this lesson is the only one that will look at the entire period.

First of all, the most concrete measure of additional activity in this period is to compare its population to previous periods. It is true that all population figures are only estimates, especially in ancient times, but they are in any case very helpful.

Year Ending Period	Global Population	Growth in 400-Yr Period	Average Annual Growth
0 AD	200 m		
400	206 m	3%	0.01%
800	220 m	7%	0.02%
1200	360 m	64%	0.12%
1600	545 m	51%	0.10%
2000	6,000 m	1001%	0.60%

The projected global growth rate at the end of the last period is of course much faster than the average for the 400-year period. Right now, a projection for the period between 2000 and 2010 is 1.55% (which is over twice the average for the last 400 years), but is, even so, an artificially depressed average for a world in which countries like Germany and Japan have a negative

growth rate while countries like Afghanistan are growing at 4.8% which is three times the current global average of 1.55%.

Another way to put it is to note that the 1200 to 1600 period added 50 percent to global population, while the 1600 to 2000 period was twenty times that much, or 1,000 percent. In Europe and America that could have been 40 times as fast.

The situation is even more extreme when you realize that the earliest spurt of growth was in the European sphere where war and disease have decreased a great deal. Today the situation is reversed where European growth approaches zero. Deaths through wars have in fact decreased so much that traffic accidents on a world level kill five times as many people.

Thus, the main thing to note is that a whole lot more happened in this last period than any other even if only because there were 20 or more times as many people in the geographical sphere of the Evangelical Awakening.

Let's now turn our attention to the nature of the Evangelical Awakening which directly and indirectly fueled what scholars have called "The Evangelical Renaissance."

It created a significantly different form of Christianity. The Reformation had stressed doctrine as the key "verification" of Christianity. The Evangelical Awakening came along and added an emotional dimension. The "Evangelical experience" was now necessary. It was not just a matter of believing the

right things, it was supposed to be an emotional experience. Pastors who were Evangelical were expected to be emotional about what they preached. Mass movements involving revivals in which people would fall down, women would be emotionally seized and whip their long hair so as to snap it like a whip - weeping, groaning became expected.

Additionally, a third dimension of "verification" of faith was the matter of "by their fruits you should know them." In a moment we will see the profound social changes that stemmed from Evangelical Christianity.

Whether right thinking, emotional experience or even "fruits" they can be faked and even faked earnestly. But it became harder and harder to fake all three.

Another generality: in the earliest centuries one of the characteristic features of human society was the relatively powerlessness of human beings. Empires there were, but on the average a whole lot more people then than now really could not very effectively "take control of their lives" as we hear so often today. The slow but steady increase of both hope and actual absolute ability sparked by the spread of Christian faith began to surface.

Curiously, it began in many cases partly because of egalitarian perspectives in the Bible. A poetic ditty from a clergyman contributed enormously to the Wat Tyler Rebellion in England as far back as 1381. He said, "When Adam delved and Eve span who was then the Gentleman?" In modern English this would come out "Back when Adam tilled a field and Eve spun some

cloth, who then was the aristocrat?" This was a serious poke at the upper class/lower class caste system in England. But it helped to fuel a major and angry movement which moved more than 100,000 rural people in upon London and the Crown, torturing and murdering a number of people authority.

In Luther's day "peasants' revolts" occurred. Aristocrats and peasants were so far removed from each other that winter hunting jaunts were known to take a few peasants along so that if an important person's feet got too cold they could be thrust into the opened abdomen of a peasant who was sacrificed for that purpose. At one point peasants, who now more and more had access to the Bible, presented ten respectful requests, one of them limiting the number of peasants that could be so used on one hunting trip. The final statement said that if there were any requests in the list that were contrary to the Bible they would be withdrawn.

Thus, the Bible caused a vast array of societal changes, mostly peaceful, but not always. Oliver Cromwell's "Roundhead" soldiers won every battle and skirmish over the "Cavaliers," who represented the upper classes. Thus shortly into our period England experienced a relatively mild revolution a hundred years before France, but nevertheless ended up cutting off the head of Charles the First. Then, Cromwell's idle army to keep in trim was energized again to cross the Irish Sea and slaughter a hundred thousand Catholics.

But with Cromwell's England (and

constitutional democracy) much else was changed. The decks of the English navy even got scoured clean enough "to eat off them." Even the vote was again and again extended to more and more of the people and finally to women.

It would be hard to believe that even the Declaration of Independence would have been signed had it not been for the English Evangelical Awakening flowing over to the American colonies and into the "Great Awakening of the Middle Colonies." Of course it wasn't just the Middle Colonies that were affected despite the name of the movement. From Boston to Charleston, now a single denomination (Presbyterian), extensively ruled by a democratic government, provided the model for a single secular government that would do the same. In 1789, when the U.S. Constitution was drafted, only one block away there was a similar group redrafting the new Presbyterian constitution, and many of the same men went back and forth. The Revolutionary War itself would not have succeeded had the Presbyterian denomination not avidly and explicitly preached the war in a way that today would cost them their tax exemption.

And then, what some people call the "Second Awakening," the surge of faith in the middle of the next century, had an equivalent causal effect on the Civil War, which to a great extent was fueled by the consciences being aroused in the minds and the hearts of millions of people.

Curiously, a Nobel Prize-winning economist, Robert Fogel, who was the

early instigator of the new academic discipline of cliometrics - the study of history by quantitative analysis - wrote an entire book on the subject of the contribution of Evangelical revivals to the unfolding story of American history. His book entitled *The Fourth Great Awakening*, insists that there is no more illuminating way to look at the American story than through the eyes of Evangelical awakenings. That a Yale University professor would write such a book is quite astounding if the thesis did not have some real credibility. Its upshot is so pro-evangelical that if a well-known Evangelical historian had written it, it would have been laughed off the stage as pure propaganda.

For our purposes in exploring the unfolding drama of the expansion of Biblical faith, probably the most significant transition in this sixteen hundred to two thousand year period is the passing of the baton from Catholic missions to Protestant missions.

From the time of Columbus the Catholic countries had the policy of sending missionaries on nearly every ship in their world explorations. Very often, as in the case of Columbus himself, these voyages were seen as means of extending the faith. Thus from 1500 to 1800 evangelization in the non-Western world was essentially a Catholic show. Tiny movements of the Quakers and the Moravians, for example, did precede the year 1800, and as Charles Chauncey's, *The Birth of Missions in America* shows, Protestants, some of them, were actually thinking in terms of missions before 1800. But by 1800 the tables were turned. The

devastations of the French Revolution by 1800 had already extensively cut the economic roots of Catholic global mission. Meanwhile, the empire of the English was rapidly growing and people, like William Carey, by the year of 1800 were already in India.

Unlike the Catholics, Protestant global explorations not only had nothing to do with missions, but were often, as in the case of the East Asia India Company, outspokenly opposed to missionary activity, thinking it might that might disturb their commercial ventures. Even in the Catholic sphere there was a tension between missionaries who were concerned for the people and commercial companies which had drastically different interests. But in a leap and a bound Protestant missionary work caught up with the Catholics within a relatively short time, and long before the year 2000 these two major sources of missionary initiative had equivalent overseas empires of faith as well as commerce.

It is important to note that colonialism is mainly a misnomer. The earliest prongs of penetration into the non-Western world were not colonial, but commercial and missionary. The Belgian Congo would be a case in point. Commercial rubber firms treated the Africans so harshly that missionaries complained to everybody who would listen including newspapers and governments, and eventually persuaded a reluctant Belgian government to extend its civil rule to the Congo in order to protect the people of that country. Stephen Neill's *Colonialism and Christianity*, paints a very different picture concerning popular thinking

about the "ravages" of colonialism. It's a simple fact that many countries were more effectively ruled by colonial governments than contemporary governments.

Once Protestants got back into the act a trickle became a major force, and along with the earlier Catholic efforts, the globe has undergone a larger transformation as a result of missionary effort, taking mistakes into account, than any other force in human history.

Protestant effort can be described in terms of three overlapping eras. The era inaugurated by William Carey didn't do much more than hit the coastlands of the world, despite many Catholic inland endeavors.

Hudson Taylor, in 1865, founded a mission with the name "China Inland Mission." Determined to go where the Catholics had already gone - inland, not just to the coasts. His work also spawned the concept of a mission of lay people as well as a so-called "faith mission" approach which was not so much a matter of not directly soliciting funds, as it was a genuine "frontier mission" approach. That was the second era.

Curiously, it began and flourished with its emphasis on the two early stages of pioneer and partnership work before the first era ended, which by this date was already emphasizing the missiological strategies of well-established fields where partnership and participation are the reigning perspectives. This clash of missiologies hampered the new era until the first era really ended and the second era also moved into the part-

nership and participation stages.

Almost immediately a third era began. This era was non-geographical. The two words coastlands and inland blanketed the earth. But two missionaries noticed that thousands of people groups had been bypassed, mainly minorities, whose languages were assumed to be unimportant. Cameron Townsend zeroed in on the tribal peoples who were distributed horizontally, while Donald McGavran zoomed in on sociological layers of society which were equally discreet and impenetrable in what could be called a "vertical" segmentation. These two men, in the 1930's, essentially tore back a huge curtain on a vast new sphere of missionary responsibility that earlier missionaries might have been overwhelmed to see. This new sphere has been called the challenge of the unreached peoples and constitutes the third era of Protestant awareness in the 1800 to 2000 year half of our fifth expansion.

There is one other major surge of mission effort that must be mentioned. One hundred and fifty new mission agencies were founded in the United States alone in the five years following the Second World War. This, however, does not mark off a new era if the eras are to be defined in terms of an awareness of a new frontier. It was a mighty surge, all right, resulting from the enforced education in global realities undergone by eleven million servicemen and women. Its distinctive character was the addition to existing mission efforts of various services such as Mission Aviation Fellowship, Far East Broadcasting Company, World Litera-

ture Crusade, etc.

Meanwhile, back home, as the year 2000 approached, the truly massive impact of the various Evangelical awakenings, notably that of D. L. Moody, had successfully transmuted from Bible Schools and Bible Institutes to Christian Colleges and Christian Universities. Thus, Evangelicals were able, not only to increase in number, but to enter the mainstream of American society and become relatively visible rather suddenly. Unexpectedly, this has triggered a rather vast groundswell of anti-Christian phobia which has frantically pushed into the courts, schools, and public society extensive anti-Christian propaganda, such as in seen in the 48 million copies sold of Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*, which so skillfully undermines the Christian faith.

In the Evangelical world itself, huge new energies are being poured into an estimated one million extremely expensive two week educational trips by mainly young people. I refer to these as educational since they are very rarely of any value to mission work in a direct sense.

At the same time, many local churches, especially mega-churches, are expressing serious mission vision by the practice of bypassing established veteran mission agencies. This also is not a good idea. A third drawback of mounting Evangelical vitality is seen in the extensively believed idea that we don't need to send missionaries any more, just money for national workers.

Another dimension, at present, is the increased emphasis on