

Week Nine Handout

“Christian History in America: Visions, Realities, and Turning Points”

Tim Castner



Class 9: The Church in a Transformed America

Class 9 Goals

*Explore the role of Christianity and Slavery in the coming and fighting of the Civil War
Examine the ways in which American culture, economy, and population was transformed by the
Industrial and related revolutions.*

*Look at the variety of ways in which Christians responded to the new conditions of the Gilded
Age.*

Ask what lessons the “Social Gospel” might have for the Church today?

Some Changes to the Syllabus

November 13th - Civil War and Gilded Age Religion

November 20th - Prohibition and the US in WWI

November 27th - The Rise of Fundamentalism and the Scopes Trial

December 4th – The United States in World Missions

Opening Question

Read through Lincoln’s 2nd Inaugural Address.

What is he claiming about the role of religion and God in the Civil War?

How do you respond to those claims?

Broken Churches Broken Nation

Major denominations which had provided powerful cultural glue for the young nation fractured over the morality of slavery.

1845 – Baptists split over whether slave-holders could become missionaries.

1837-1861 Presbyterians split first over theological issues, then slavery, then with the Civil War

1845 Methodist churches split over Slavery (divide the largest denominational infrastructure in the nation.)

Some denominations ultimately reconciled – others such as the Baptists remain split today.

The Causes of the Civil War

(My Thoughts and Conclusions)

Deep South (S. Carolina)

Seceded from the Union because they feared the election of the Republican Lincoln meant the end of slavery.

Upper South (Virginia)

Seceded because they did not believe the nation could stop seceding states from leaving
(States' Rights)

The North

Went to war to preserve the Union (almost a religious idea ("last best hope"))

Made the war about ending Slavery only when they realized that they could only win the war by abolishing slavery.

And Remembering . . .

The development of "Lost Cause Ideology"

Painted a portrait of contented slaves and a Christian Civilization in the South destroyed by Northern Aggressors.

Downplayed slavery as a cause for the war

Gone with the Wind, God's and Generals.

Southern "Redemption?"

With the end of Reconstruction in the 1870's white supremacists "redeemed" the south from "carpetbag" rule.

The rise of Jim Crow instituted a system of segregated churches and pro-segregationist theology.

Often black ministers and churches were forced to acquiesce in this system in exchange for white financial patronage.

An Age of Engineering Marvels

An Age of Skyscrapers

Population of Chicago

Population of the United States

The Annihilation of Distance

Revolutions in Communication

Revolutions in Energy

Revolutions in Industry

Revolutions in Industrial Relations

Changing Immigration Trends

Growing Religious Diversity

For Table Discussion

If the economic and cultural context in which Christianity is practiced changes dramatically should the church attempt to change as well?

How would you propose that the church respond to these dramatic changes in 19th century

American life?

The Rise of D.L. Moody

Moody – the leading Evangelist of the "3rd Great Awakening"

"I look upon this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a lifeboat and said to me, 'Moody, save all you can.'"

Brought a traditional "small town" gospel to save people from the evils of the big city.

Moody and Sankey

Song leader – Ira Sankey

Performed sentimental hymns
At Moody's revival meetings.
Moody sought unconventional places for his revivals such as downtown theaters and concert halls.
Moody embraced "dispensational pre-millennialism" and sought world-wide evangelism, but
eschewed efforts for social reform – saw that as a distraction from evangelism.

Moody as Institution Builder

Formed a Bible training college for lay workers – becomes the Moody Bible Institute.
Hosted summer missions conferences at Northfield, Massachusetts, provided the impetus for the
Student Volunteer Movement – pushed for "the evangelization of the world in this generation."
Founded Northfield/Mt. Hermon Schools – site of future C. S. Lewis College.

The Rise of the Social Gospel

While Moody pushed for Evangelization and to preserve and expand "small town" Christianity –
others sought for social teachings in the Bible that would transform increasingly "Godless"
institutions into cities, neighborhoods, and workplaces that would allow the work and life of the
Gospel to flourish.
Washington Gladden – sought better wages for workers.
Charles Sheldon asked "What would Jesus Do?"

Salvation Army

Founded in England in 1865 by William and Catherine Booth
Came to the United States in 1880 through the work of their daughter Evangeline.
Sought to provide Social Services to the poor and as a way of gradually introducing them to the
Gospel.
Original programs included food, shelter, medical aid, job training, elementary school, internships in
factories, legal aid, heating assistance.

YMCA

Young Men's Christian Association
Example of "Muscular Christianity"
Provided alternative "Christian" housing in big cities and moral instruction.
Gradually developed gymnasiums to provide healthy and morally sound alternatives to saloons and
other city temptations.
Provided the space where both basketball and volleyball were invented.
Now known simply as "The Y" – no longer maintains a "Christian Identity."

Walter Rauschenbushch

Leading Social Gospel proponent
(still emphasized the importance of individual conversion.)
Renewed emphasis on the Hebrew Prophets and their message of Social Justice.
The "day of Jehovah," means in part "punishment for the wicked. . . .the rescue of the weak. . . .
(and) moral justice rather than economic prosperity."
Enormously influential for Martin Luther King Jr.

Rauschenbusch's Ideas

(Pre-Russian Revolution)

Criticized "Competitive Capitalism" for exalting "selfishness to the dignity of a moral principle."

Claimed that only a revival of social religion could prevent revolution and anarchy.
Many of his specific proposals - kindergartens, playgrounds, children's centers, and educational facilities – would likely only have limited impact
Called for a fairer redistribution of wealth – but had no specific mechanism to carry it out.

Rauschenbusch and Peace

“Grant to the rulers of nations faith in the possibility of peace through justice, and grant to the common people a new and stern enthusiasm for the cause of peace. Bless our soldiers and sailors for their swift obedience and their willingness to answer to the call of duty, but inspire them none the less with a hatred of war, and may they never for love of private glory or advancement provoke its coming. May our young men still rejoice to die for their country with the valor of their fathers, but teach our age nobler methods of matching our strength and more effective ways of giving our life for the flag.”

Concluding Questions

Do traditional methods of Evangelism and Missions still work in a changed world?
How effective are different forms of outreach at correcting societal injustices and laying the groundwork for Evangelism?
Is Social Gospel work a “half-way house” to unbelief?
How do we balance the demands for Evangelism and Social Justice
Next Week: Prohibition and the Church in WWI

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