



A History of Missions

Video of Church Spreading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Gp-ZsUagc>

Key Point 1: God is building his Church.

Matthew 16:18

Jesus said: “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hades will not overcome it.”

Key Point 2: The Church is part of God's eternal plan.

Key Point 3: God's ways are not our ways.

Key Point:
The Church
does not
grow...

- In a logical manner.
- Consistently, geographically or numerically.
- In a way that honors men.

Key Point 4: – The Church is inexorable.

“... the gates of Hell shall not stand against it.”

Each time the church encounters something, an empire, a movement, an idea, a culture, that should logically, in our eyes, destroy it, it conquers it, and comes out stronger, with a better view of God.

Key Point:
The Church
grows...

- Despite opposition from titanic forces – empires, religions, philosophies.
- Unexpectedly, in weakness, and in odd ways.
- In spite of bad theology, bad motives, and bad methods.

Key Point 5: We must understand missions as God's work.

To get a proper understanding of missions is to understand the imperfect, misguided actions of Christians, combined with the wills of empires, philosophical forces, and culture movements, as all being used by God to build His church, not in the way that we think, but as a monument to His skill and ability.

Key Point 6: God is revealing Himself to us (the Church), through the growth of the Church.

70-300 AD – Summary

From the Beginning to an Official Religion of the Roman Empire

The growth of the early Church was without precedent or comparison.

These few Galileans spread their good news across the entire known world.

They did it without all of the things we think of as necessary for missions now:

- Clear Theology
- Knowledge of other cultures
- Administration and organization
- Funding

If in 70 AD the Church had ceased to exist, no one would have known or cared. By 300 AD, Christians made up almost 10% of the Empire.

Key Missional Factors: Lay missionaries, Individual Witnessing, Charity, Martyrs, and Literature and the Arts.

300-500 AD Summary

- From an Official Religion to the Fall of the Roman Empire
- Tremendous growth for the Church, yet through turmoil.
 - The Church becomes a recognized religion of the Roman Empire (persecution stops), then then religion of the Roman empire, then the Roman empire is destroyed – all in 200 years.
 - Growth is both in numbers, clarity of theology, and administrative structure.
 - Church is diluted by influx of pagans.
- Tremendous growth for the Church, yet without normal missionary efforts.
 - The Church grows through cultural adoption (even by barbarians).
 - The Church grows by conversion of leaders of countries and people groups.
 - Focus is on theological debates and combating heresy, not witnessing to pagans.
- We see the predecessors for future missionary efforts.

Key Missional Factors: The legalization of Christianity, its recognition as the official religion of the Roman Empire, and the attractiveness of Roman Culture.

500-1200 AD – Summary

From the Fall of Rome to the Height of the Church in the Middle/Dark Ages

Tale of Two Enemies – the Muslims and the Barbarians

The Church during this time experienced unprecedented growth, yet through conquest.

- At 1000 AD, the church was at the height of its global reach and influence.

The sword/conquest had the greatest impact on the spread of Christianity.

- We see this everywhere from the conquest of the barbarians to the Crusades, to the destruction of the Eastern Church

Key Missional Factors: Conquest, conquest, conquest, royal favor, martyrdom, and monasticism.

- Conversion often begins with the rulers.
- Priests and church leaders are willing to go repeatedly into areas where their predecessors were martyred.
- Monasteries lead the way.

1200-1500 AD – Summary

From the height of the Church to its fall - the destruction of the Eastern Church and the fall from material power of the Western Church.

- In spite of this, we see the Western's Church's legalism reach its heights with the Crusades, inquisition and indulgences.

We once again see God preserving the Church from the Mongols and the Muslim Empire.

Multiple reformers are rejected by the Church.

But, we see the groundwork being laid for not only the Reformation, but a major Roman Catholic missions movement.

Key Missional Factors: Attractiveness of Eastern Liturgy, Conquest/Crusades/Inquisition.

1500-1800 - Summary

At the beginning, the Protestant Reformation brings new, revolutionary ideas about the church and its structure.

But, these new churches are not missional. They are Calvinistic, believing that evangelism is unnecessary, or otherwise focused on survival against the counter-assault by the Roman Catholic Church.

The Church as a whole, remains largely tied to national governments.

Protestants and Catholics are at war in Europe with each other for almost a century.

Missionaries in this time are largely Catholic or Russian Orthodox. We do see some protestant missionary activity among the Native Americans and by the Moravians.

At the end of this time, the Great Awakening advances Protestant theology, with a focus on repentance of sin, a conversion experience, and sanctification.

Key Missional Factors: Expansion of Nations (for Catholics and Orthodox and Native Americans), Catholic Orders in Asia.

1800-1900 – “The Great Century” - Key Dates

1792 – William Carey writes *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use means for the conversion of the heathen* and forms the Baptist Missionary Society

1795-1796 – London, Scottish and Glasgow Missionary Societies are formed.

1799-1816 – Dozens more Missions Societies are formed.

1816 – Robert Moffat arrives in Africa.

1826 – American Bible Society sends the first shipment of Bibles to Mexico.

1840 – David Livingstone arrives in Africa.

1854 – Hudson Taylor arrives in China.

1885 – Korea is opened to the Gospel.

1910 – Edinburgh Missionary Conference held in Scotland, at height of ecumenical Protestant missions.

1800-1900 – Great Century - Beginning

At the beginning of the Century: “It was still by no means certain that Christianity would be successful in turning itself into a universal religion.” Stephen Neill.

Battered by rationalism and the enlightenment – the idea that man was the highest good and reason was everything.

Protestant Christianity scarcely existed outside of Europe and America. Asia and Africa were almost untouched by the gospel.

Churches were not involved in missions and very antagonistic toward each other.

- Calvinistic views
- Church was tied to government and expanded as nations expanded.

1800-1900 – Great Century – The End

By 1910, Protestant Christians had made inroads all over Asia and Africa.

Thousands of Christians spread out over the globe, supported by millions.

- There was a tremendous passion to spread the gospel by most Christians.

Difficult to describe the scope of the work.

- **“Never had any other set of ideas, religious or secular, been propagated over so wide an area by so many professional agents maintained by the unconstrained donations of so many millions of individuals.”** Kenneth Scott Latourette.
- In 1800, only about 2000 of the nearly 13,000 distinct ethno-linguistic peoples in the world had been reached. By 1900, over 4100 had been reached.
- 4,000 American Missionaries were abroad in 1900 (whereas there were almost none in 1800).

By 1910, we have Edinburgh Missionary Conference or World Missionary Conference:

- High water mark in Protestant Missions.

1800-1900 - Opposing Forces

Imperialism/Colonialism

- Various Wars with other powers and with third-world countries.

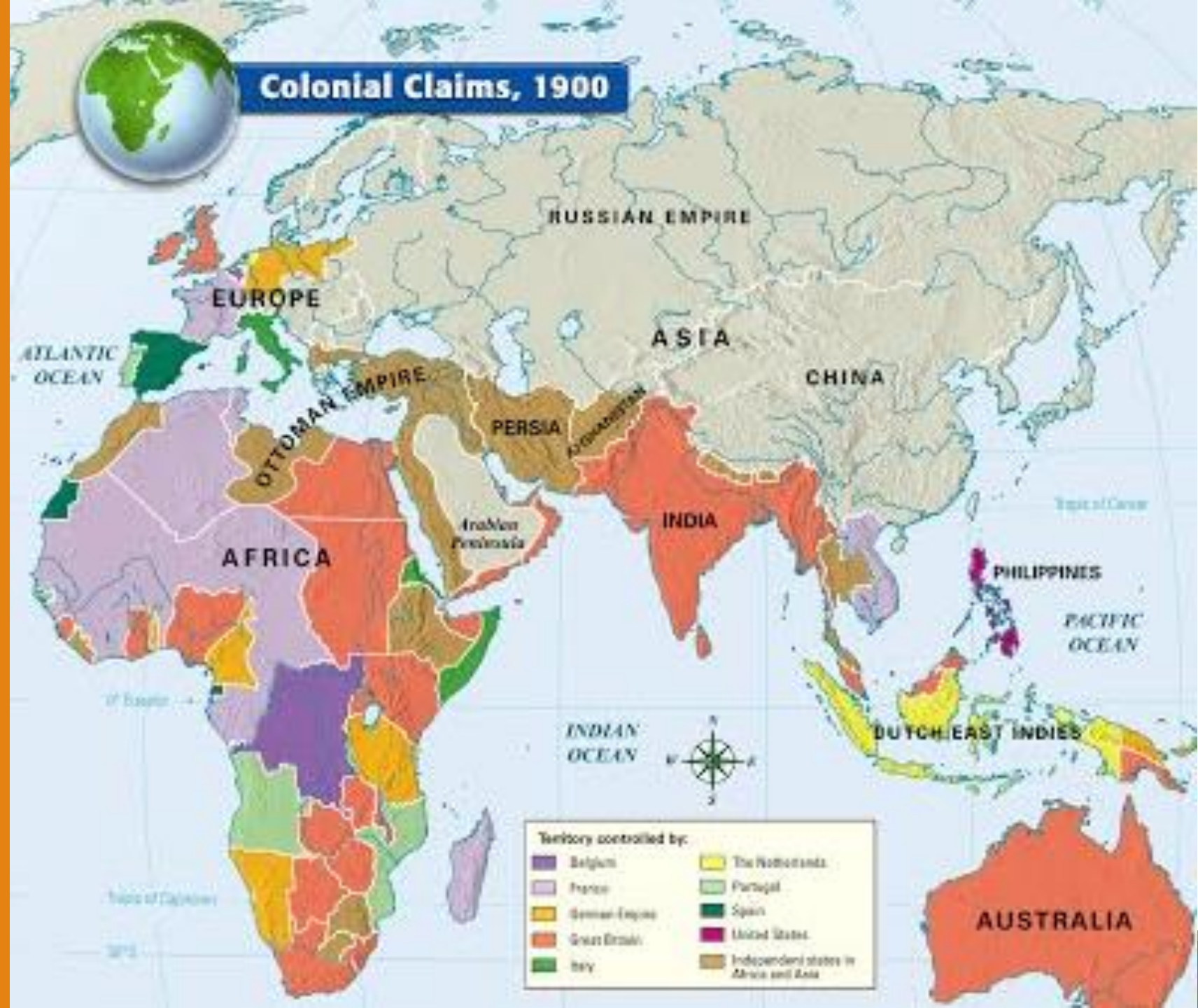
Darwinism/Marxism

Enlightenment/Rationalism/Romanticism

Trade/Profits (the East India Company)

- Missionaries were frequently treated like illegal immigrants by colonial powers.

Colonial Expansion in 1900



1800-1900 - Churches

Now viewed themselves as separate from the government. – Voluntaryism.

- Note: The Puritans in New England tried to combine church and government and failed.
- “The American view of Church and state is rooted in the conception of the church as a spiritual body existing for spiritual purposes, and moving along spiritual paths. And consequently, it never occurred to the average American that there is any reason why state churches should exist... Compulsion of any kind is contrary to the nature of such a body. ... It desires not state help ... it does not seek for exclusive privileges.

Societies became the norm and not just for missions.

Catholic Church was greatly weakened by the French Revolution and German opposition.

Eastern Orthodox Church was weakened by internal strife and divisions.

1800-1900 - Theology

Wesley/Great Awakening – 1720-1750

- Viewed justification as only being part of obtaining God's righteous.
- In other words, justification only got you part of the way.
- Also, viewed predestination and unconditional election as wrong.

Second Great Awakening and Third Great Awakening – 1790-1910

- These caused a shift from Calvinistic to Armenian views.
- Baptist and Methodist Churches grew tremendously.
- Colleges and mission societies were founded as a result.

Post-millennialism was very much in vogue at the beginning and gave way to modern premillennialism at the end.

Toward the end of the 19th century, we see the beginnings of liberal theology, denial of hell, salvation for all, validity of other religions and beliefs, etc...

1800-1900 – Missionary Strategy/Efforts

Mission Societies – not churches – led the way.

Motivated by a sense of duty and the return of Christ/millennialism.

Assisted by Colonialism/Industrial Revolution

Focused on voluntary acceptance of the Gospel, not compulsion

Assisted by the wealth and talents of common rank and file Protestants, not just priests and monks.

Bible Translation and Humanitarian Ministries.

Culture Change that accompanied the Gospel.

The Edinburgh Conference in 1910.

Mission Societies

England:

- Baptist Missionary Society was formed in 1792
- London Missionary Society was formed in 1795
- Church Missionary Society in 1799

Europe:

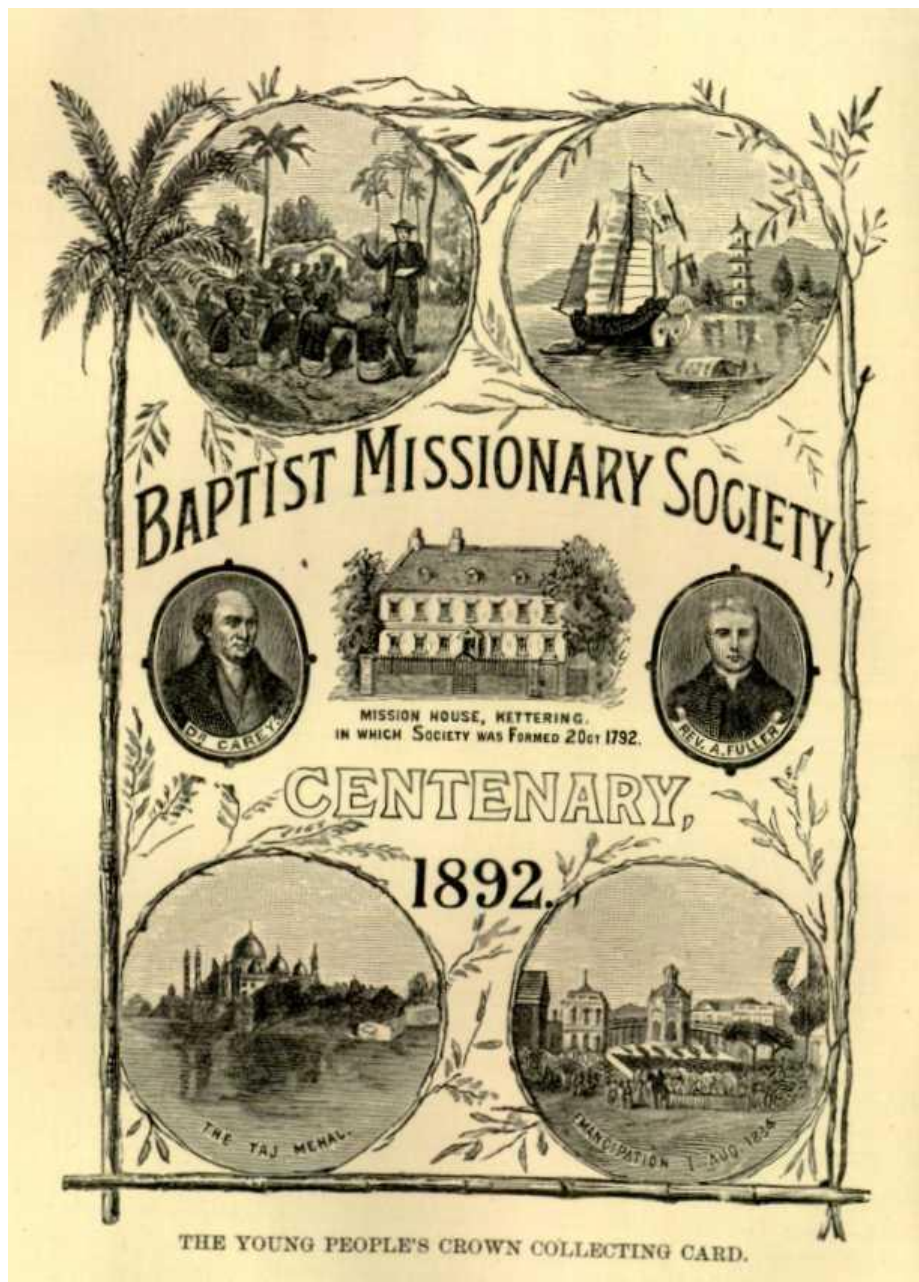
- Netherlands Missionary Society in 1797
- Basel Mission in 1815

America

- American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1810
- American Baptist Missionary Board in 1814

And dozens more

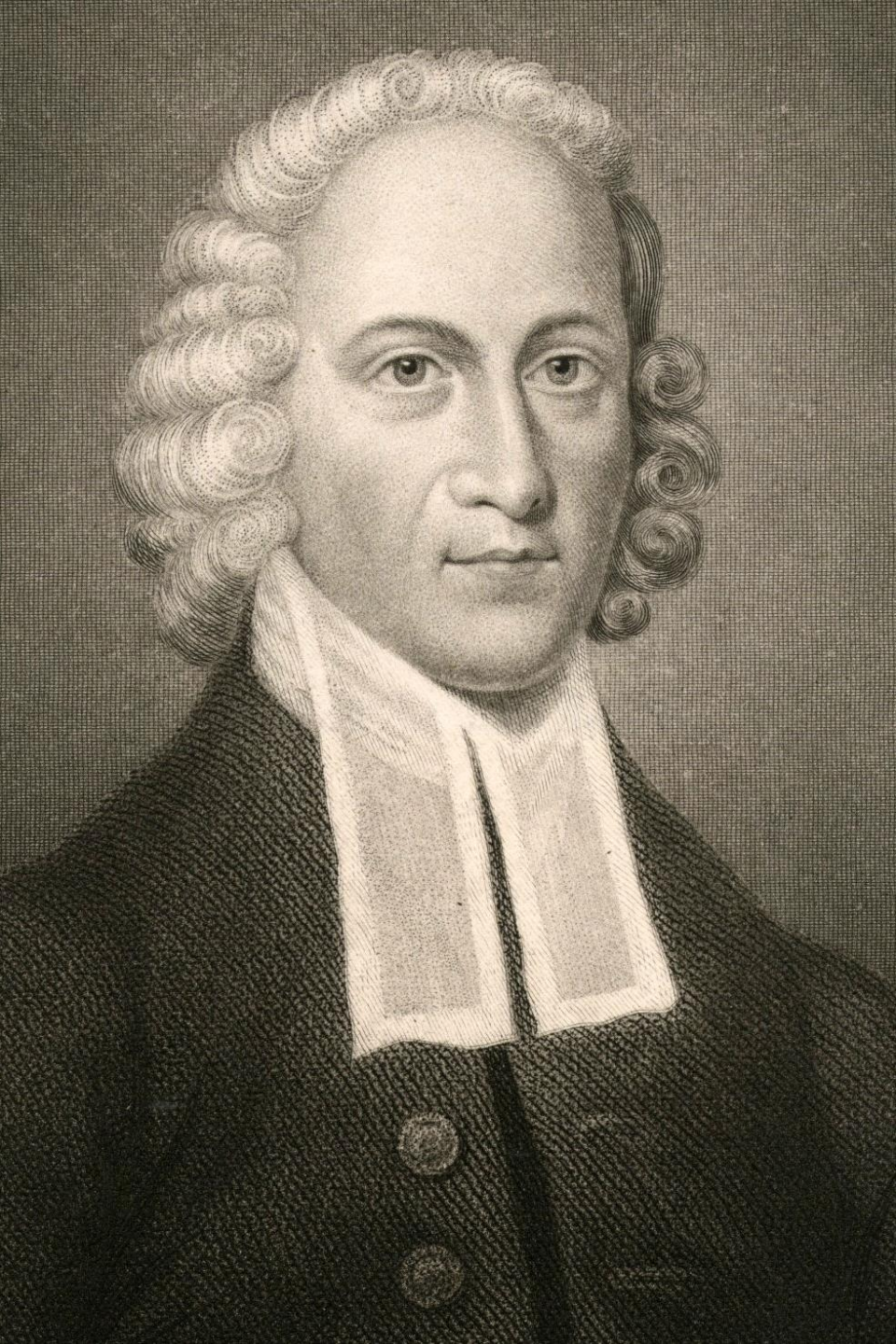




Mission Societies – The Reason

In England, the church was not interested and societies were all the rage.

In America, the church was not well-organized or well funded.



Motivations of the Early Protestant Church

Evangelism (Carey) – we are commanded to preach the gospel.

- That at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow... Phil 2: 10

Millennialism (Jonathan Edwards) – we can spread the gospel and bring in the reign of the Lord, after he is known by all men.

Colonialism/Industrial Revolution

Colonialism – the conquest of third-world countries by the major European powers.

The Industrial Revolution brought power to Europe in the form of steam engines and other technology, and with that power, came the urge to conquer.

Pro: This made it practical and safe for missionaries to live in Eastern Countries.

Con: Missionaries are often seen as assisting with imperialism, or the growth of the British Empire, at the expense of native culture and independence.

The truth is complicated.

- Missionaries brought western culture and improvements in education, healthcare, and government.
- But, the Western Man viewed himself as superior and frequently rejected native customs and traditions.

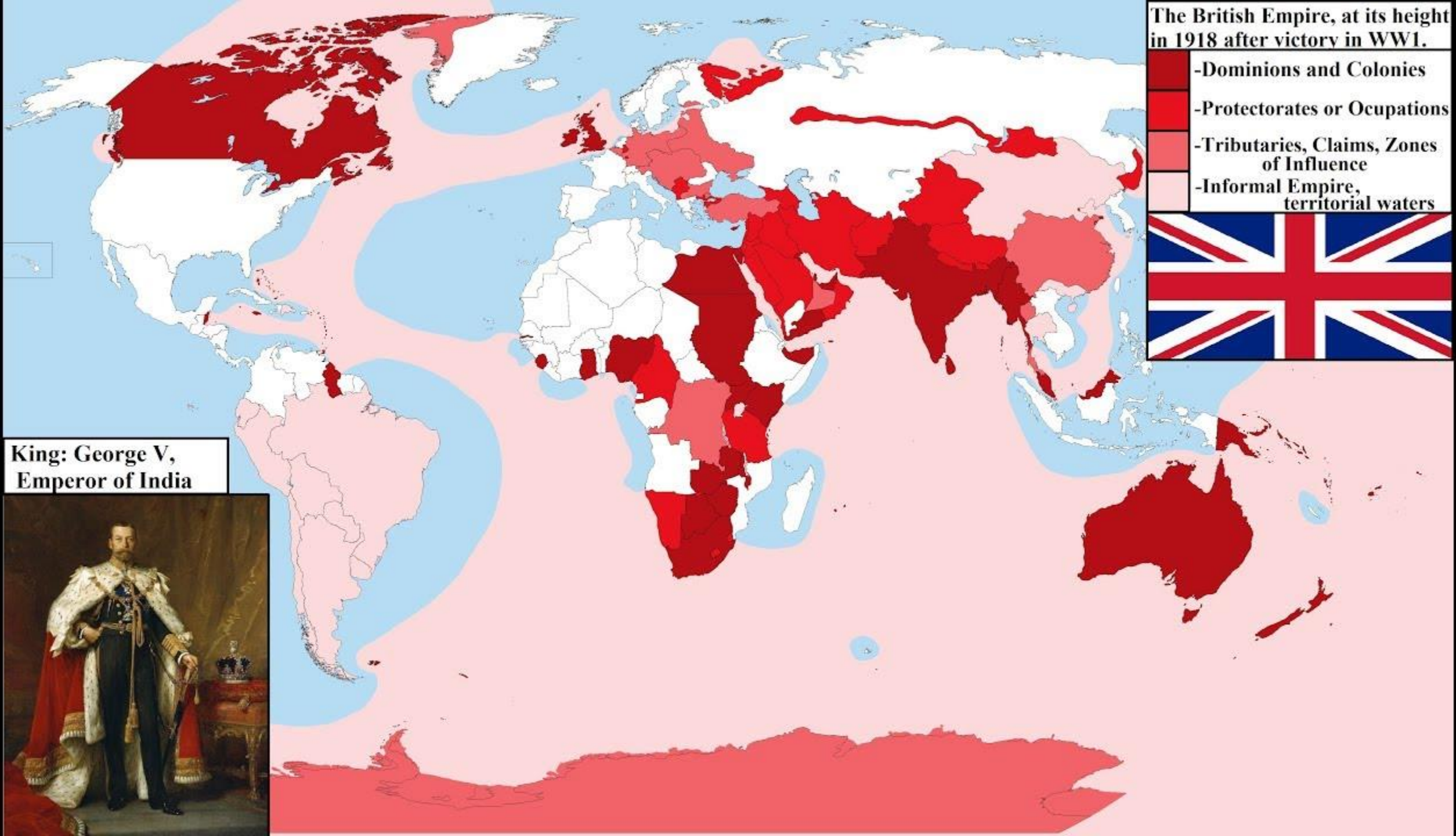


**The British Empire, at its height
in 1918 after victory in WW1.**

- Dominions and Colonies
- Protectorates or Occupations
- Tributaries, Claims, Zones of Influence
- Informal Empire, territorial waters



**King: George V,
Emperor of India**



Missionaries and Imperialism

“The Christian missionaries were as much part of the colonizing forces as were the explorers, traders and soldiers... missionaries were agents of colonialism in the practical sense, whether or not they saw themselves in that light.” Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*

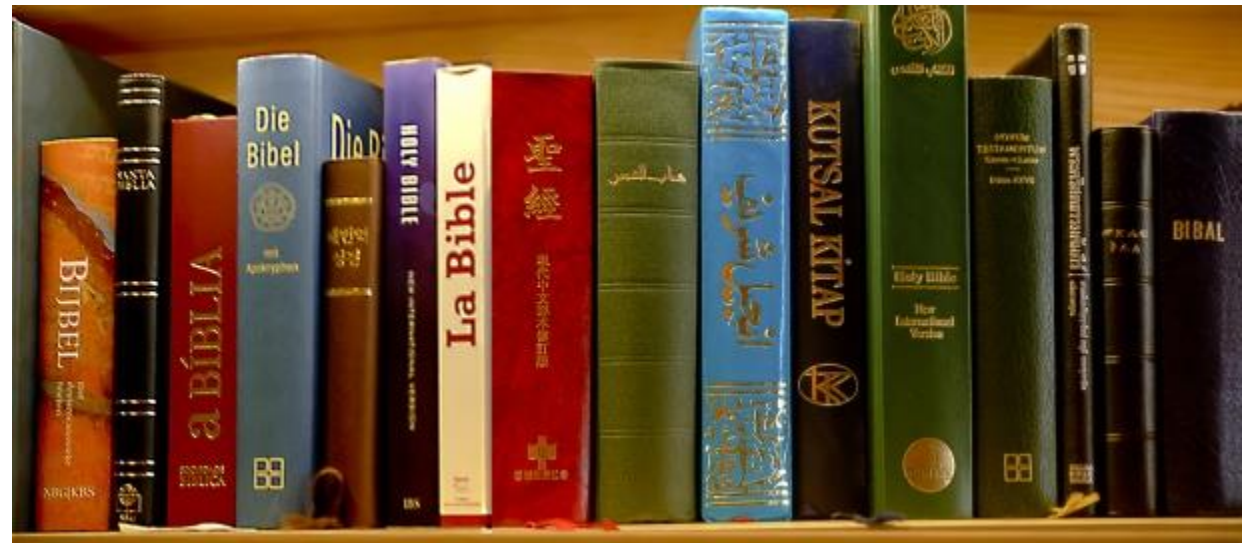
“While British traders were exploiting their African customers, the missionaries preached peace, forgiveness and good neighborliness, which actually prevented genuine rebellion, self-preservation and determination. Missionaries worked towards the preservation of the status quo and upholding of the master-servant relationship between Africans and Europeans.”
Takudzwa Hillary Chiwanza.

Bible Translation

The Bible in the native's tongue is the weapon of the missionaries.

During the 19th century, the Bible was translated into 400 new languages.

- Before then, it was only translated into 10-15.



Humanitarian Ministries

This was mainly education, medicine, and social reforms.

While Christians missionaries during this time were/are frequently accused of importing their own culture, they did a tremendous amount of good.

During this time period, much of the Africa and Asia went from being barbarians (tribal groups would could not read and engaged in horrific practices) to somewhat civilized, with a written language and self-governance.

William Carey

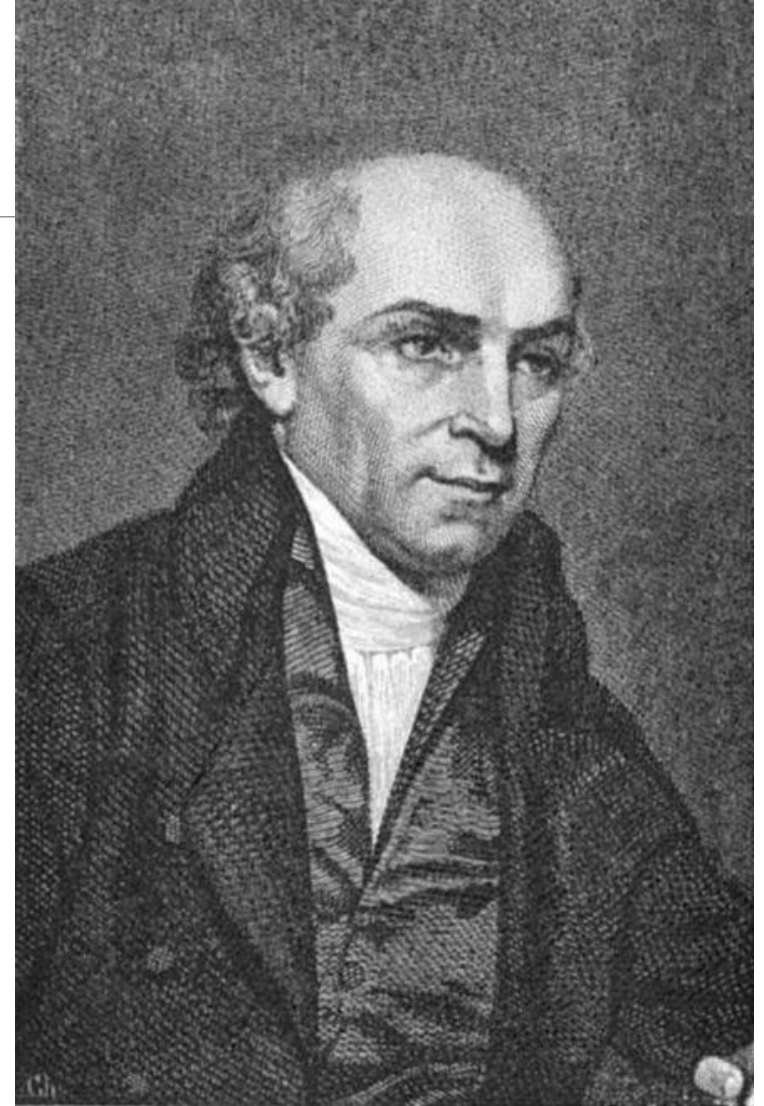
Fathers of Missions

Worked in Serampore, India for 41 years without a furlough.

700 Converts, but he laid an impressive foundation of Bible translations, education and social reform.

Viewed favorably by Indian nationalists for his love of Indian culture.

His first wife was against his being a missionary, and suffered from mental illness.



David Livingstone

A hero of Victorian England and an explorer of Africa.

He did very little missionary work himself, but he focused the world on the needs of Africa.

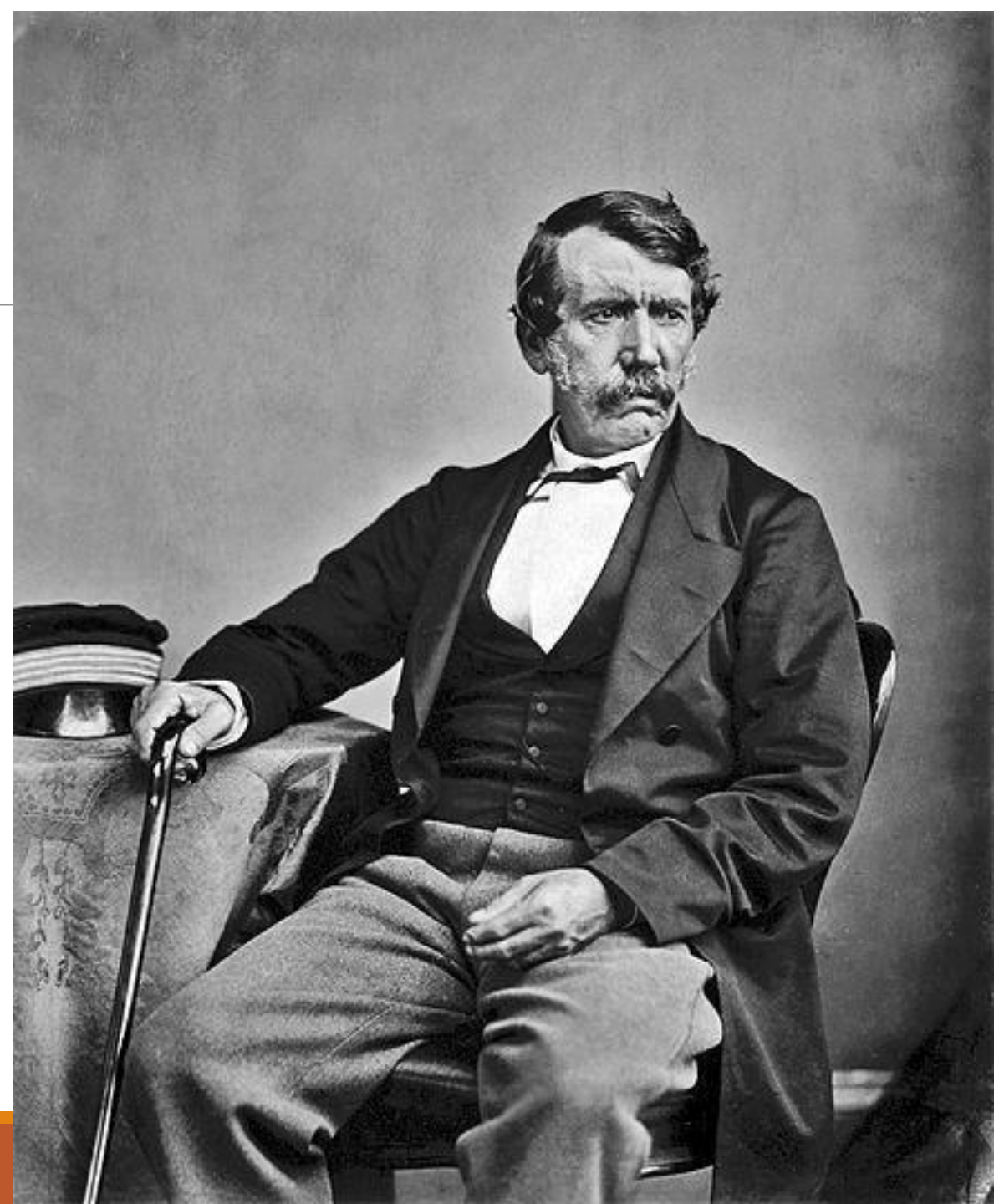
He was primarily an explorer, but he recognized the danger of the slave trade, and the need for Christianity.

- His slogan was that only commerce and Christianity will save Africa.

Early in his career, he left his family (his wife and children) in Cape Town. His wife wrote that she and the children were “homeless and friendless” and “often living on the edge of poverty in cheap lodgings.” Later, his wife would leave their children in England and return to Africa, where she died. Livingstone remained in Africa.

He frequently (although not purposefully) misled other missionaries about the suitability of various sites.

His death, in 1878, spurred on a tremendous missionary fervor toward Africa.



Edinburgh Conference

1215 Attendees

All Major Denominations represented, except Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

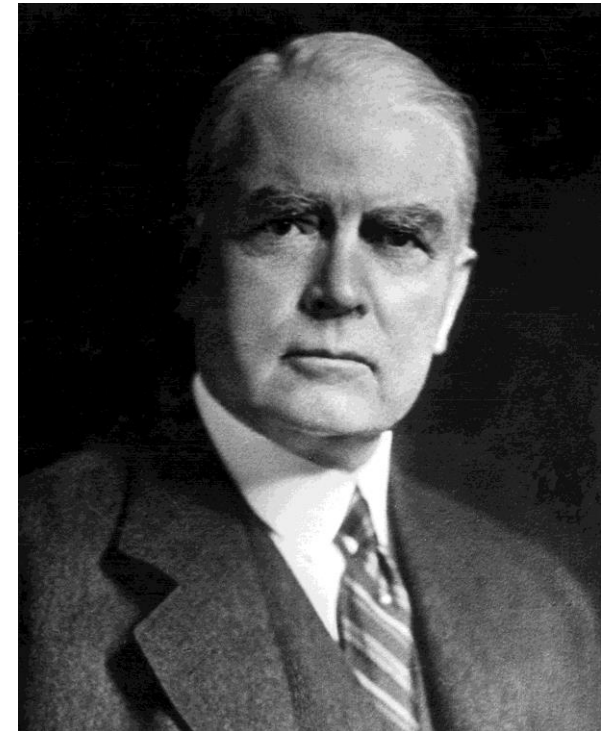
160 Societies and Churches

United in fundamentals of Christianity (inerrancy of Scripture, salvation by faith and faith alone, necessity of witnessing, etc...)

Years of preparation and study beforehand.

Slogan by the Chairman Dr. John Mott: "The Evangelization of the World in this Generation."

General Idea: "Each generation of Christians bears responsibility for the contemporary generation of non-Christians in the world and it is the business of every Christian to see that the gospel is clearly preached to every non-Christian in the same generation."



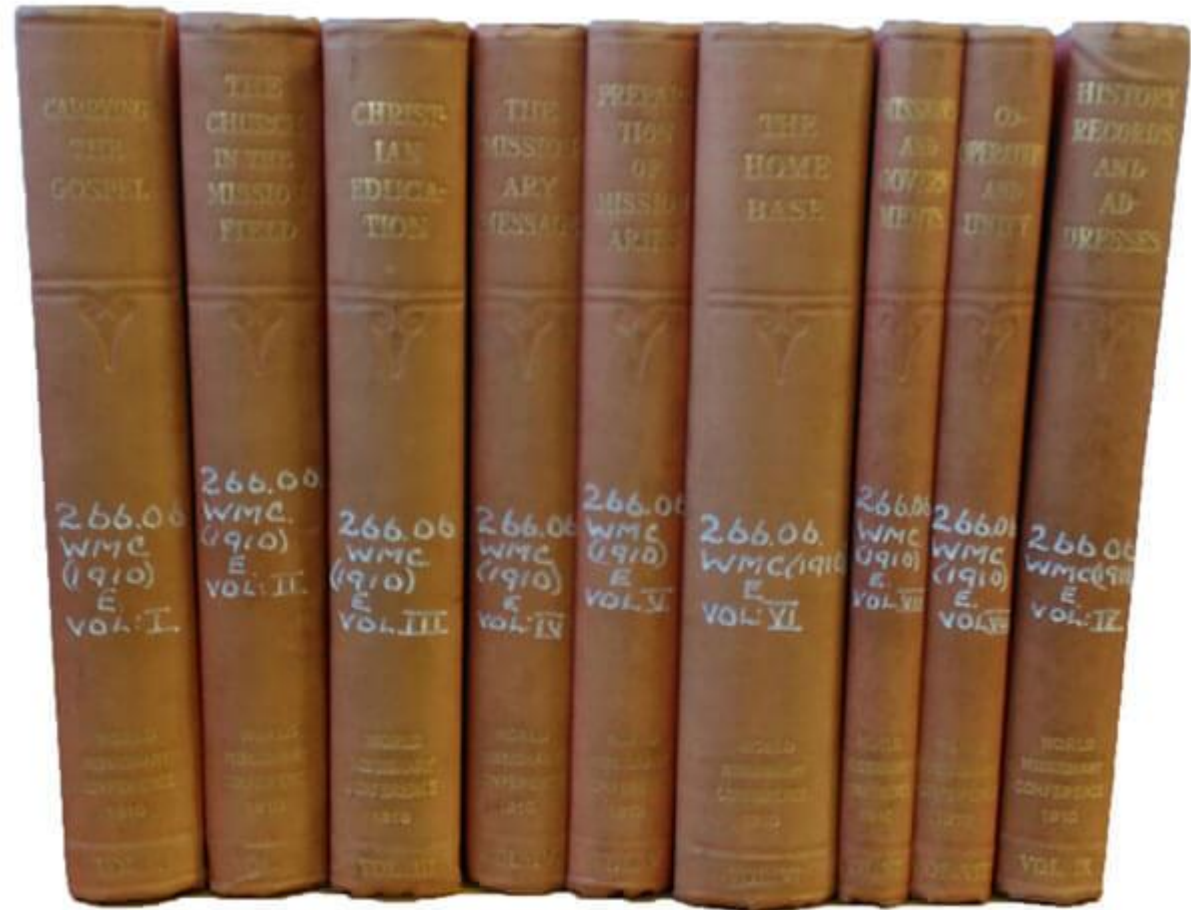
Edinburgh Conference - Groups

Anglicans, United Free Church of Scotland, Baptist Union, Presbyterian Church of England, United Methodist Conference, Religious Tract Society, British Syrian Mission, Livingstone College, Manchester University, Student Volunteer Missionary Union, Baptist Missionary Society, Baptist Zenana Mission, British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Among the Jews, Cambridge Mission to Delhi, Ceylon and India General Mission, China Inland Mission, Church Missionary Society, Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee, Church of Scotland Committee for Conversion fo the Jews, Church of Scotland Woman's Association for Foreign Missions, Christian Literature Society for China, Christian Literature Society for india, Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society, Egypt General Mission, Episcopal Church in Scotland, Foreign Mission Board, Free Church of Scotland, Friends' Foreign Mission Association, Kurku and Central Indian Hill Mission, London Missionary Society, London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews, Mission to Lepers in India and the East, National Bible Society of Scotland, New Hebreides Mission, North Africa Mission, Oxford Mission to Calcutta.

Edinburgh Conference - Commissions

1. Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World,
2. The Church in the Mission Field,
3. Education in Relation to the Christianization of National Life,
4. Missionary message in Relation to the Non-Christian World,
5. Preparation of Missionaries,
6. Home Base of Missions,
7. Missions and Governments, and
8. Co-Operation and the Promotion of Unity.

More Info: <https://www.religion-online.org/article/the-world-missionary-conference-1910/>



Edinburgh Conference – Reasons for Hope

1. Most countries were open to the Gospel and most of the pioneer work (languages learned, Bible translations)
2. Tropical medicine allowed missionaries to live in almost any climate.
3. National pastors stood with the missionaries to aid them and the newer churches were producing leaders.
4. Churches were engaged as never before and financial aid was keeping pace with the expansion of the work.
5. Universities in the west were producing a steady stream of men and women with great potential for missionary work.

But....



1800-1900 - Summary

Protestant Christianity went from a tottering religion to a world-wide force.

The view of missions as something to be done by God (Calvin) or the state was exchanged for the view that missions/evangelism was the responsibility of every Christian.

The common church member became excited about and a supporter of missions.

Thousands of lay Christians went, supported by millions, bringing the gospel to tens of millions.

But:

- The Gospel was frequently combined with western culture.
- Missionaries frequently participated in the destruction of native culture, at best, and abuse of the natives, at worst.
- The theology of why they were going was suspect and frequently wrong.
- Discipleship is largely missing.

1800-1900 - Summary

In one sense, these were the best of Christians, ones who deserved their names carved in the hall of faith.

But, in another sense, they were selfish, self-centered, self-glorying people.

They thought they could bring about the salvation of the world.

In another sense, they were terrible Christians, abandoning spouses and children and taking advantage of native populations for their own well-being.

Conclusions

Key Point 1: God is building his Church.

- Not man. During the 19th century, we see man's efforts, often with wrong motivation and theology.
- But, it doesn't mean that God can't use these – from slavery to the current African church.

Key Point 2: The Church is part of God's eternal plan.

- God's eternal plan does not involve man glorifying himself, or causing the return of God through some sort of human effort.

Key Point 3: God's ways are not our ways.

Key Point 4: The Church is inexorable.

Key Point 5: We must understand missions as God's work.

Key point 6: God is revealing Himself to us (the Church), through the growth of the Church.