

The Story of Christ's Church

The Story of Christ's Church – Part 6

1789 – 1914 AD : Revolution, empire-building and world evangelisation



Storming of Tuileries Palace, Paris, 10 Aug 1792

Aim: to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit through the losses and gains of this time.

Intro: this 125 year period is called Great Century because revolutionary changes across Europe swept away old political regimes and Church's dominance, wealth and power. Yet it also witnessed the universalising of Christ's Church as Europe's colonial empires expand.

1. Political revolution sweeps across Europe

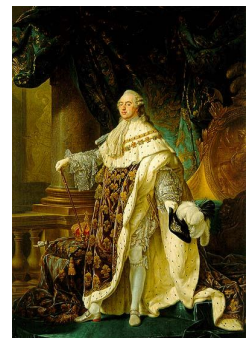


Storming the Bastille (1789)

The longing of ordinary people for greater justice, freedom and power strengthened in Europe throughout the 18th century and started expressing itself in uprisings in 1776 when North American colonists declared independence from Britain. In Paris on 14 July 1789 street fighting broke out as enraged peasants stormed prison, freed prisoners

and burnt to ground symbol of old oppressive regime.

The French revolution shattered the belief that kings have a divine right to rule. Peasant farmers felt alienated from the land-owning Church (one third of all land was in the possession of the Church). Furthermore, the Church sided with King Louis XVI who hadn't convened Parliament for 175 years. Church and nobility backed king and army against 95% people who lived miserable lives working land.



King Louis XVI

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In August 1789, the "Declaration of Rights of Man" was published. Church lands were confiscated, Papal power in France was destroyed as bishops and priests had to be elected by people and made to swear allegiance to new Constitution rather than Pope. The Pope could only appoint bishops if State agreed. Some of these 'Rights of Man' have become part of our whole way of life:



Approved by the National Assembly of France (26th August 1789)

Therefore the National Assembly recognises and proclaims, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following rights of man and of the citizen:

Article I : Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be bounded only upon common utility.

Article II : The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.

Article V : Law can only prohibit such actions as are hurtful to society. Nothing may be prevented which is not forbidden by law, and no one may be forced to do anything not provided for by law.

Article IX : As all persons are held innocent until they shall have been declared guilty. If arrest shall be deemed indispensable, all harshness not essential to the securing of the prisoner's person shall be severely repressed by law.

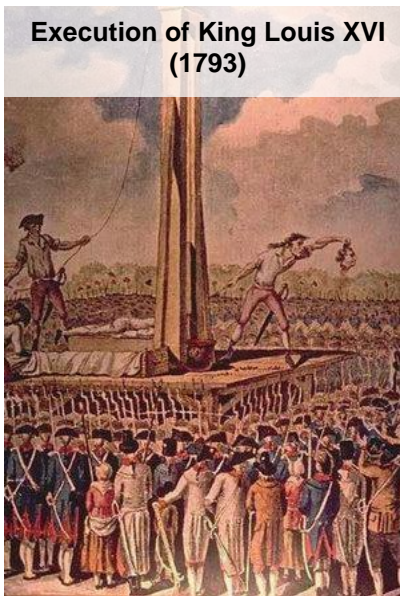
Article X : No one shall be disquieted on account of his opinions, including his religious views, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law.

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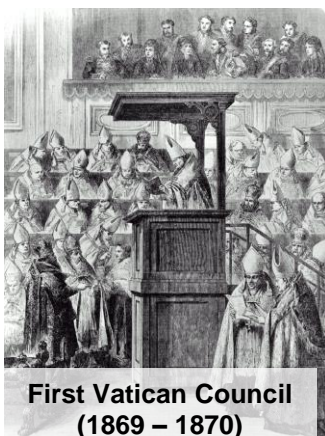
Article XI : The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law.

Article XV : Society has the right to require of every public agent an account of his administration.

Although it establishes fundamental rights for French citizens and all men without exception, it addresses neither the status of women nor slavery; despite that, it is a precursor document to international human rights documents.



The French Revolution split the Church; some agreed, but many didn't. Many nobles and clergy who opposed revolution executed in 1792. King Louis XVI was guillotined in 1793. French clergy received a regular stipend from the State and Protestants were granted freedom of religion. Lawlessness prevailed until Napoleon took control in 1795. 1848 saw similar revolutions in Germany and Italy with political power ebbing away from the Pope. As a result the Papacy reasserted its spiritual power: in 1854 P Pius IX decreed Immaculate Conception of Mary; in 1864 the Papal Syllabus of Errors condemned "political liberalism" (democracy), "liberal theology", "free masonry", "religious toleration", "Bible Societies", "separation of Church and State".

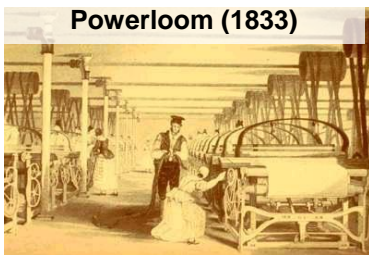


Papal power peaked in 1869 when Pope Pius IX called first Vatican Council which voted against independent regional Catholicism in favour of loyalty to Pope. As a result, on 13 July 1870, Pope Pius IX published dogma of papal infallibility: infallible on faith and practice when speaking ex cathedra. This dogma was opposed by Cardinal Newman of England and German Church historian Dollinger (later excommunicated). Vatican I compensated for the loss of Papal political power by stressing absolute authority of Pope as a monarch within Catholic Church.

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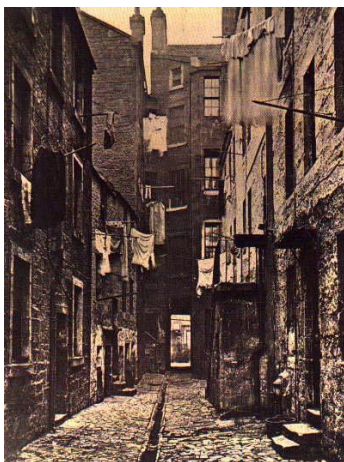
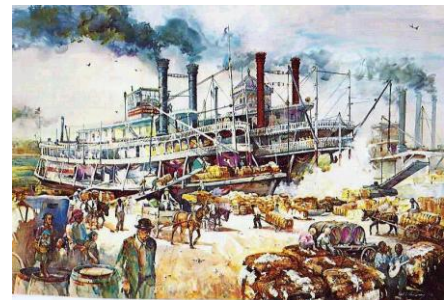
2. Europe's Industrial Revolution

A school boy once described Industrial Revolution: "In 1760 a wave of gadgets swept over England." The **Industrial Revolution** heralded major changes in agriculture, manufacturing, and transportation and had a profound effect on how people lived, worked and saw themselves. The changes subsequently spread throughout Europe, North America, and eventually the world.



It was a major turning point in human society for amongst every aspect of daily life was influenced in some way. There was a transition a manual-labour-based economy towards machine-based manufacturing. It started with the mechanisation of the textile industries, the development of iron-making techniques and the increased use of refined coal.

The dramatic increase in production capacity was linked to expanding trade markets to the big centres of population. The introduction of canals, improved roads, steam powered railways and ships speeded up the transport of products from factories to shops. It brought human labour, state-of-the-art machinery and mass-produced goods all under one factory roof. Eventually the internal combustion engine and the generation of electrical power created new business opportunities. The effects spread throughout Western Europe and North America, and eventually affected most of the world. The impact on society was enormous, for it was revolution by consent.



Urbanisation was speeded up. The countryside could no longer cope with its increasing population. The victims of bad harvests and rural poverty poured into the cities with their attractive but hated new factories. They did not hate the long hours, or low wages, for slums in the cities were on par with the slums in the countryside. What they hated most was that the rhythm of the machine replaced the rhythm of nature in their daily lives. The easier pace of country life was replaced by the precision, discipline and regularity of the factory. The sun in the sky was replaced by the factory clock and bell. The greatest sin of the urban masses was drunkenness for it threatened all values of

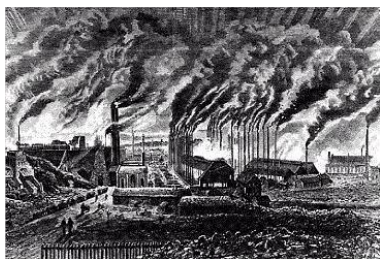
the developing capitalist system!

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The Industrial Revolution and the capitalism that drove it brought with it a new kind of morality: hard work, high standards, punctuality, discipline, good use of time and avoidance of waste. These values were encouraged by the Evangelical revivals which saved England from the worst excesses of the French Revolution.



Some families enjoyed huge wealth but most people continued to live in poverty and misery. These four Manchester children were involved in a child-labour campaign to reduce their working hours to 10 hours per day. But in the churches little attention was drawn to the teaching of Jesus about the spiritual dangers of wealth or issues of justice and siding with the most neglected elements in society.



“Those dark satanic mills”



1825 Yorkshire apprentice house – noonday meal

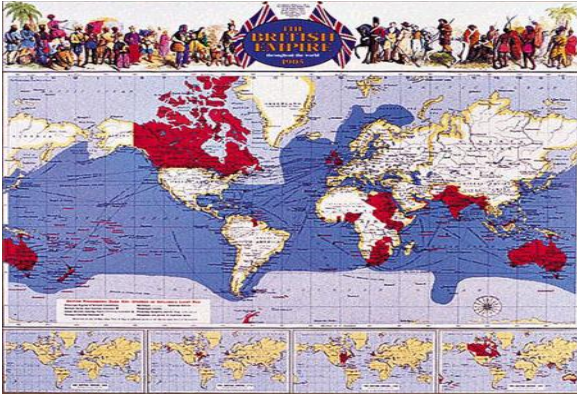
The cities of England grew rapidly, especially in the Midlands and the North. William Blake speaks of the “dark satanic mills”; Charles Dickens says of Coketown: “a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves forever and ever and never got uncoiled.” Church of England slow to adapt to the new situation while Methodists, Congregationalists and Baptists developed ministries to the ordinary people in the new towns and cities, engaging in evangelistic and social renewal projects.



On Census Sunday in Victorian England in 1851 70% of population turned up for Church, but by 1900 there was a sharp decline, especially in the cities. There were now millions in, what General Booth of the Salvation Army describes as “the unreached urban jungles of darkest England”. The Church was in serious decline at home!

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3. The reality of world evangelisation



In 1789 Christianity was religion of white people in Europe and American colonies. By 1914 it had taken root worldwide (especially in tropical Africa and Latin America), while in Europe it was declining. Missionary vision and commitment developed slowly within Protestantism.



Capt. James Cooke
1728-1779

Captain James Cook, the British naval officer, cartographer, and explorer, famous for his three great voyages of exploration into the Pacific Ocean and North American coastal waters believed Church should not be planted in the islands he visited because it was not worthwhile financially. But in 1701 Anglicans founded “Society for Propagation of Gospel” because American colonies were overrun by vice and Presbyterians! But people like Jonathan Edwards believed that the time was near when Gospel would fill the earth.

As European powers scabbled for overseas territories, missionaries went along; they did not oppose imperialism, but relations between them and colonial powers difficult; native leaders emerged from mission schools committed to overthrowing imperialism. If missionaries were associated with rise of imperialism, they were also associated with its destruction. In 1790's evangelical Clapham group founded Sierra Leone to be i) haven for freed slaves; ii) base for missions in Africa. From here Christianity spread to W Africa. Evangelicals pressed for trade to continue, not in cheap labour (slaves) but cheap raw materials. Substitute for slavery: Christianity, commerce and civilization.

Cessation of Tahiti to Capt. James Wilson & London Missionary Society (1798)



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Evangelistic impulses first seen among Moravians gave birth to missionary societies. The Moravian Church, which originated in the Czech provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, launched a global mission in 1732, going first to the Caribbean. They arrived in Barbados in 1765 and sought to bring Christianity and education to the slaves. They were the first Europeans to encourage slaves to join their congregations. Some Moravian missionaries sold themselves into slavery in West Indies in order to reach the slaves by sharing their lives fully.



Sharon Moravian Church,
Barbados (1799)

By 1790 individual UK Baptists, Methodists and Anglicans sought to evangelise through missionary societies. Only by 1820 did missionary concern develop in British church life; bishoprics were established in India; Church of Scotland promoted missions with educational dimension. From Evangelicals and from Anglo-Catholics interest, funds and personnel began to flow.



London Missionary Society (1908)
Miss Simmons with low caste
children, in Andhra Pradesh, India

The birth of British missionary societies had nothing to do with protection of British interests abroad. The **London Missionary Society** was a non-denominational missionary society formed in England in 1795 by evangelical Anglicans and Nonconformists, largely Congregationalist in outlook, with missions in the islands of the South Pacific, Africa and Asia.

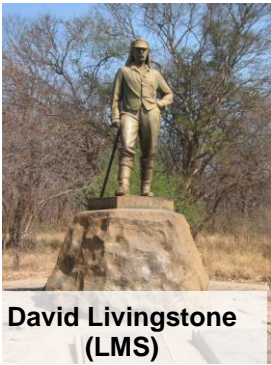
British East India Company:
Robert Clive, 1st Governor of Bengal



In fact missions were viewed with suspicion because trade might be lost in India if attempts were made to convert Hindus and Muslims. Evangelicals began to tell **British East India Company** to waken up to its Christian responsibilities, not tax Hindu temples or allow burning of widows, but stand up for Christian faith. Britain, they were reminded, owed a debt to Africa because of the slave-trade and to India for draining away its wealth. The Company, originally set up for

trading, took over India and virtually ruled it until the India Rebellion of 1857 when the British Crown assumed direct control in 1858.

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Missionary societies also pressed British Government in 1841 to support the development of agriculture in Niger and so undercut the slave trade.

David Livingstone, missionary-explorer, was born in Scotland in 1813; after conversion, he served with the London Missionary Society from 1841 to 1856 in Africa. His walk across Africa in 1851-56 opened up new areas for missionary work there and exposed horrors of slave trade. After his death in 1873 Church of Scotland opened up missions in central Africa which reflected his vision and ideals.

Hudson Taylor of Yorkshire (1832-1905) was converted at 17, and went from Barnsley to China at 21. There he founded the China Inland Mission to bring Gospel to every province of Chinese empire; he urged his missionaries to identify with people and assume Chinese dress.



By the 1890s, Christians were speaking of the evangelisation of world in one generation; it seemed possible until World War I broke out. But now the Church, which in 1789 seemed so European, was made up of a great multitude from many lands and of many tongues. The day of the truly universal Church had arrived.

Conclusion: through political revolution the Church is humbled to learn from its neglect of justice; through social revolution it learns to engage with the most neglected sectors of society as part of the challenge of the Gospel. In the rise and fall of imperialism it accepts the open doors for the Gospel as well as prepares nations for freedom and independence. Call of world mission is to take God seriously; to take the Gospel seriously; to take world seriously.