

Christianity and Politics: Relative Quiet from 1865 to 1950s

For a century after the Civil War: Christianity a diminished Force

--The absence of a Christian consensus on slavery made Christianity less relevant for public life.

--The main Christian groups were largely coopted by political partisanship:

Northern white Protestants—mostly Republicans

African Americans—all Republicans

Southern white Protestants—all Democrats

Catholics—almost all Democrats

--General developments at home submerged Christian concerns:

Rapid industrial expansion Increased immigration

Rapid westward expansion Intellectual transformation

Religious fragmentation (RCs, Orthodox, Fundamentalist, Modernist, Pentecostal)

Percentage of Religious Adherents

	<u>1860</u>	<u>1926</u>
White Protestants of British Background	69.4%	42.7%
Roman Catholics	21.4	29.5
Black Methodists and Baptists	1.7	10.4
Lutherans	2.6	6.2
Jews	1.3	6.0
Population	31.5m	117.0m
Reported church membership	37%	58%

--Also captivating national and international involvements

Spanish-American War World War I “Roaring 20s”

The Depression World War II The Cold War

--Presidents were still known as Christians

Rutherford B. Hayes (1877-81) James A. Garfield (1881)

William McKinley (1897-1901) Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909)

William Howard Taft (1909-1913) Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921)

+ Democratic presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan (1896, 1900, 1908)

Major Christian Initiatives

--Missionary expansion accompanied increased American expansion into the world

African Inland Mission, Student Volunteer Movement, denominational missions

1898: Sp-Am War 1900: New York Missionary Convention

1910: Large American participation in Edinburgh Missionary Conference

--Urban evangelism (D. L. Moody & Ira Sankey). Church Cooperation (FCC, 1908)

Temperance/Prohibition (the main Christian intervention in public life)

- Goal: social transformation through personal discipline
- Wide consensus: All Protestants except confessional European groups; some “dry Catholics”
- Prohibition Party (first women delegates, pres. candidate from 1872, 1892: 2% of pres. vote)
- WCTU led by Methodist Frances Willard (evangelical, family advocate, critic of industrialized society)
- 1895, The Anti-Saloon League (“The Churches in Action against the Saloon”)
- WWI perceived as caused by German infidelity and fueled by German drink
- 18th Prohibition Amendment (1919) and 19th Women’s Suffrage (1920) parts of a package.
Billy Sunday, January 17, 1920 (Norfolk VA): a funeral sermon for John Barleycorn: “Good-by, John, the reign of tears is over. . . . The slums will soon be only a memory. We will turn our prisons into factories and our jails into storehouses and corncribs. Men will walk upright now, women will smile, and the children will laugh. Hell will be forever rent.”

Industrial Expansion, Urbanization

- The era defined by Vanderbilt, Rockefeller, Carnegie, Mellon, et al.
- Rapid city growth (urban population 1860 = 19%; 1920 = 51%)
- Protestant efforts: Salvation Army, considerable cooperation among later Funds. and Moderns.
- Main Christian emphasis: personal redemption and discipline
- “Labor Christianity”—e.g. Andrew Cameron, 1867 (the 8-hour day implements “the teachings of Christ and the enlightened spirit of the age”)
- “The Social Gospel”: Washington Gladden; Walter Rauschenbusch (1907, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*); Charles Sheldon (1897, *In His Steps*: “what would Jesus do?”)

Intellectual leadership shifts from churches to the universities

- Ezra Cornell (telegraph, banks); Johns Hopkins (banking, RRs); Cornelius Vanderbilt (steamships, RRs); Leland Stanford (RRs); James Duke (tobacco); John D. Rockefeller (oil)
- science the new guide. A. D. White, *A History of the Warfare between Science & Theology* (1895)
- Darwinism and the higher criticism of Scripture

Racial relations after the Civil War

- Strong black churches emerge, with colleges, publications, missionaries, etc.
- Strong leadership: Daniel Alexander Payne (AME), Henry McNeal Turner (AME), Booker T. Washington (Baptist), Amanda Berry Smith (evangelist), Ida B. Wells (journalist)
- Powerful backlash: Southern “redemption” before and after 1876. KKK and other vigilante groups. Lynching. Jim Crow. Segregation in north as well as south.
- Black leaders spoke up, but almost no one was listening.