

The Gradual Marginalization of Biblical Christianity In America During The Early 20th Century

1890's- 1920's = "The Progressive Era" was marked by the conviction that intentional government intervention into the lives of the American people was a good ("progressive") action. It was fueled by the transformation of American higher-education via the importation of European "Enlightenment" thinking. It impacted on government, academia, religion, labor and media. (Eugenics also had a lot of support during this time.)

1892 - Francis Bellamy's flag pledge: "I pledge allegiance to my flag and *to* the republic for which it stands: one nation indivisible with liberty and justice for all."

1900 - "Speaking in tongues" was promoted by Charles Parham at his Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas. When the school closed, he continued preaching in Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas.

1906 - The "Azusa Street Revival" took place in Los Angeles, under the leadership of William J. Seymour, a recent student of Parham back in Texas. Many participants were from the "Holiness Movement," a modernization of Wesleyan principles. This is considered the beginning of the Pentecostal Movement.

Report in the Los Angeles Times: "Meetings are held in a tumble-down shack on Azusa Street, and the devotees of the weird doctrine practice the most fanatical rites, preach the wildest theories and work themselves into a state of mad excitement in their peculiar zeal. Colored people and a sprinkling of whites compose the congregation, and night is made hideous in the neighborhood by the howlings of the worshippers, who spend hours swaying forth and back in a nerve racking attitude of prayer and supplication. They claim to have the 'gift of tongues' and be able to understand the babel."

Parham's personal assessment: "Men and women, white and blacks, knelt together or fell across one another; a white woman, perhaps of wealth and culture, could be seen thrown back in the arms of a big 'buck nigger,' and held tightly thus as she shivered and shook in freak imitation of Pentecost. Horrible, awful shame!"

Some of the denominations which spun off from this event were The Church of God in Christ (1907), the Assemblies of God and the United Pentecostal Church (both 1914) and the Pentecostal Church of God (1917).

1908 - The Federal Council of Churches was formed from 30, socially-oriented, Protestant groups.

"The object of this Federal Council shall be-

- I. To express the fellowship and catholic unity of the Christian Church.
- II. To bring the Christian bodies of America into united service for Christ and the world.
- III. To encourage devotional fellowship and mutual counsel concerning the spiritual life and religious activities of the churches.
- IV. To secure the larger combined influence for the churches of Christ in all matters affecting the moral and social condition of the people, so as to promote the application of the law of Christ in every relation of human life.
- V. To assist in the organization of local branches of the Federal Council to promote its aims in their communities."

1910-1915 = The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth was published.

1913 - The 16th Amendment (Individual, Federal Income Tax) became effective.

----- The Federal Reserve came into existence.

----- The 17th Amendment (Direct Election of Senators) became effective

1914 - Margaret Sanger (34 yrs), the future founder of Planned Parenthood, railed against Biblical marriage in her "No Gods, No Masters" publication, promoting "birth control" as a woman's right.

----- The "Millennial Dawn" teacher, Charles Taze Russell, had predicted (back in 1876) that the "Gentile Times" would end & the kingdom of God would begin in October, 1914. The failure of this predication resulted in twisted explanations rather than the abandonment of Russell.

1914-1918 = World War I (U.S. entered the war in 1917)

1917 - The “Jehovah’s Witnesses” reorganized themselves under the leadership of “Judge” Rutherford, after the 1916 death of their original leader, Charles Taze Russell.

----- The Balfour Declaration was issued in support of “Zionism.” “His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”

1918 “The October Revolution” occurred in Russia, characterized by atheism.

1919 - The League of Nations was formed in connection with the end of World War I

----- In her pamphlet, “Why Not Birth Control?” Margaret Sanger wrote, “...more children from the fit, less from the unfit—that is the chief issue of birth control.”

1919-1920 = “The Red Scare” arose within the U.S.

1920 - American Civil Liberties Union was formed to defend those accused of “Red” sympathies.

----- The 18th Amendment (Prohibition) became effective.

----- The 19th Amendment (Women’s Suffrage) became effective.

1925 - The Butler Act was adopted in Tennessee. It stated, “it shall be unlawful for any teacher in any of the Universities, Normals and all other public schools of the State which are supported in whole or in part by the public school funds of the State, to teach any theory that denies the Story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.”

----- The A.C.L.U. recruited a Tennessee teacher, John Scopes (25 yrs), to challenge the Butler Act.

----- Tennessee vs. Scopes. William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925) prosecuted Scopes for teaching evolution in violation of Tennessee law, with Clarence Darrow (1857-1938) defending. Darrow’s defense was two-fold: 1) evolution was an established scientific fact, 2) evolution did not conflict with reasonably held Christianity. Here’s one famous exchange, after Darrow had maneuvered Bryan onto the stand as an expert witness:

Mr. Bryan—The purpose is to cast ridicule on everybody who believes in the Bible, and I am perfectly willing that the world shall know that these gentlemen have no other purpose than ridiculing every Christian who believes in the Bible.

Mr. Darrow—We have the purpose of preventing bigots and ignoramuses from controlling the education of the United States and you know it, and that is all.

Mr. Bryan—I am glad to bring out that statement. I want the world to know that this evidence is not for the view Mr. Darrow and his associates have filed affidavits here stating, the purposes of which I understand it, is to show that the Bible story is not true.

Mr. Malone—Mr. Bryan seems anxious to get some evidence in the record that would tend to show that those affidavits are not true.

Mr. Bryan—I am not trying to get anything into the record. I am simply trying to protect the word of God against the greatest atheist or agnostic in the United States. (Prolonged applause.) I want the papers to know I am not afraid to get on the stand in front of him and let him do his worst. I want the world to know. (Prolonged applause.)