

A Century of Advance

The 19th century was the greatest century of missionary advance. It was a century of astounding inventions and of spectacular advances in technology. Many countries in Europe experienced dramatic spiritual Revivals. Christian missionaries won whole tribes and nations to Christ, in the remotest regions of the globe.

Shattered



1914 shattered Europe. An entire generation of young men died in brutal trench warfare. No other war changed the map of Europe so dramatically. Three great European empires were destroyed: The German Empire, The Russian Empire and The Austro-Hungarian Empire, that had held the line and protected Europe from the threat of Turkish invasion for centuries.

A Disastrous Century

1914 marked the end of the greatest century of Christian advance and the beginning of what proved to be the worst century of persecution. The consequences of the First World War continue to have far reaching repercussions to this present day.

A Catastrophic War

Of the 60 million European soldiers who were mobilised from 1914 to 1918, over 9 million were killed, 7 million were permanently disabled and 15 million were seriously injured. Contemporaries called it The Great War because it was literally greater than any war ever waged before that time. In numbers of soldiers involved, in numbers of casualties, in terms of the disastrous consequences, it was the most catastrophic event in the history of European civilisation.

When Christians Dominated the World

In 1914 Christian nations ruled virtually the whole world. With the exception of China and the Ottoman Empire, the globe was dominated by Christian powers, either Protestant, as in the case of Britain, Germany and the United States; Roman Catholic as in the case of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the French

Empire, Italy, Spain, Portugal, etc., or Orthodox as in the case of the Russian Empire.

A Century of Peace and Progress

Following the Battle of Waterloo and the conclusion of the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars, the Congress of Vienna ushered in a century of comparative peace. It was also a century of astounding increases in population growth, and unprecedented increases in productivity and standards of living. The 19th century had been a century of incredible achievements, growth and expansion. By 1914, all the inhabited world had been penetrated and, for the most part, mastered by people who had traditionally been known as Christian.

Great Promise

Christianity came to the beginning of the 20th century on a rising and apparently unstoppable tide. Christianity was gaining spectacular momentum as missionaries from Europe were evangelising and discipling virtually every tribe and nation. The Protestant Faith had far outstripped the Catholic and Orthodox branches in missionary activity, vitality and initiative. From being confined almost entirely to North Western Europe, the British Isles, a narrow strip on the Eastern seaboard of North America, and with a small outpost at the Cape of Good Hope, the Protestant Faith in the 19th century had become a truly international Faith. It was also the dominant Faith of the most productive, powerful and prosperous nations in both the Northern and Southern hemispheres. Amidst irrepressible optimism, many were openly speaking of the beginning of the Biblical millennium on earth.

Retreat from Victory

At the first World Missions Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, delegates were anticipating the completion of the Great Commission within their generation. No one in 1910, would have anticipated the wholesale abandonment of entire nations to communism, false religions and heathenism. Nor would any have predicted that the church would retreat from victory to such an extent that they would even be questioning the existence of the devil, or hell, or reinterpreting marriage to include what God in the Bible describes as perversion and an abomination.

The Guns of August

The Christian era of bold missionary expansion came to an abrupt end as the guns of August 1914 erupted. The great European countries which had been the heartland of Christendom, and the source of most of the world's missionaries, devastated each

others economies and annihilated millions of one another's young men in what has to be recognised as the most tragic and senseless conflict in history.



A Cataclysmic Conflict

Before the First World War, Europe had never been more powerful, or more self-confident. There was no hint of any possible challenge to its leadership of the civilised world. 1914 marks a far more drastic turning point than 1815, or 1648, or any other of the watershed events in its earlier history. As the great nations of Europe mobilised for war against themselves it was said: *The lamps are going out all over Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime.*

Disastrous

Yet, even as that was said, it could not have been anticipated how much destruction and dislocation of Christian civilisation would come from this disastrous conflict. When lamps of political wisdom, spiritual truth, intellectual and artistic progress, moral foundations and economic growth were rekindled, they shone far less brightly in the ancient centres of European civilisation than they had for centuries before.

Sinister War Mongers

The sinister bankers who pulled the strings behind the scenes and engineered the auto genocide of Europe, were also the ones who owned many of the companies that made the machine guns, bullets, bombs, shells and artillery that destroyed the cream of Europe. There are numerous studies that have shown the role of Freemason bankers and politicians such as Lord Nathan Rothschild whose goal was to bring down Christian civilisation.

A Satanic Conspiracy

Nothing could have stopped the positive onward march of Christianity worldwide, except that the Christians were persuaded to kill one another so enthusiastically and so efficiently. During the course of The Great War, 8% of Great Britain's total population were killed, or wounded, 9% of Germany's total population were killed, or wounded and, 11% of France's entire population were casualties.



width="250" />Devastating</p> <p style="margin-right: -1.15pt; text-align: justify;">Even more devastating than the actual numbers of people killed, crippled, or severely injured, was the damage to the spiritual life of Europe. Europe went from being a majority church attending population to a continent where most people did not go to any church.</p> <p style="margin-right: -1.15pt; text-align: justify;">
</p> <p style="margin-right: -1.15pt; text-align: justify;">Secularisation</p> <p style="margin-right: -1.15pt; text-align: justify;">The secularisation of Europe and the breakdown of moral standards coincided with a great surge of revolutionary fervour. Marxist communism filled the vacuum left by the collapse of the Russian Empire and by the emergence of many of the new countries in Eastern Europe in place of the Austrian Empire. Along with the spiritual decline of Europe came the decline of Western Europe on the total world scene. The 19th century had seen such staggering growth in numbers, productivity, military power and wealth that one would have expected that Europe would have continued to dominate the globe for centuries to come.</p> <p style="margin-right: -1.15pt; text-align: justify;">
</p> <p style="margin-right: -1.15pt; text-align: justify;">Disillusionment</p> <p style="margin-right: -1.15pt; text-align: justify;">For over a thousand years, Europe has been Christendom, the heartland and stronghold of Christian civilisation. The optimism which had prevailed in the 19th century gave way to profound pessimism after the First World War. The de-Christianisation and secularisation of Europe was not only unprecedented in its scope and speed, but it would have been unthinkable before the First World War. In Europe, the traditional stronghold of the Christian Faith, the proportion of those who called themselves Christian declined and the percentage of those who regularly attended church services fell off even more drastically. While Protestants increased rapidly in Africa, North and South America and in Asia, the numbers of Christians in Europe sharply declined.</p> <p style="margin-right: -1.15pt; text-align: justify;">
</p> <p style="margin-right: -1.15pt; text-align: justify;">What could have caused such a Cataclysm?</p> <p style="margin-right: -1.15pt; text-align: justify;">It is notable that Social Darwinism had become popular amongst most of the governments of Europe. This thinking emphasized the importance of armed struggle between nations as healthy and necessary for evolution and progress.</p> <p style="margin-right: -1.15pt; text-align: justify;">
</p> <p style="margin-right: -1.15pt; text-align: justify;">Entangling Alliances</p> <p style="margin-right: -1.15pt; text-align: justify;">There were also the entangling alliances, particularly the Entente Cordiale between France and Russia (1894), between Britain and France (1904), and between Britain and Russia (1907), that formed the Triple Entente. The question is

why Great Britain would have formed an alliance with their traditional enemies, the French and Russians, against their traditional allies, the Germans? And how did a terrorist act in Sarajevo sever the special relationship between Britain and Germany that had endured for centuries?

Diplomatic Dominoes

It was understandable that Austria was going to deal with her troublesome neighbour Serbia, which had been encouraging and hosting revolutionaries and terrorists against the Austrian Hungarian Empire. However, as Austria presented an ultimatum to Serbia, the Russian Empire mobilised against Austria. This led to Germany mobilising in support of its Austrian ally against Russia. The French were allied to the Russian Empire and were spoiling for a fight to reverse the humiliating military defeat they had suffered at the hands of Germany in 1870.

Reversal

Strangely, King Edward VII had allied Britain to France and Russia, probably out of spite for his parents, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. So, Britain ended up on the side of its traditional enemies, France and Russia, against its traditionally closest ally, Germany.

Hidden Manipulators

Most of the 60 million soldiers involved in the Great War would have been unable to explain what they were actually fighting about. That they were pawns in a diplomatic power game manipulated by unseen conspirators behind the scenes would have been the furthest thing from most of their minds.

British Involvement

From the British point of view involvement in the First World War is an even greater mystery. No British interests were at stake, and had Britain stayed out of the European conflict it would not have become a World War.

What would have happened had Britain stayed out of the Conflict?

First of all Britain would have kept her Empire. Secondly Germany would have been able to defeat both France and Russia in a matter of months. New treaties would have been signed, some borders may have been adjusted, but no cataclysmic collapse of Empires would have

occurred. The death toll would have been a fraction of what it became. America would not have been dragged into the war, Europe would have remained the most powerful industrial, political and military force in the world. The constitutional monarchies in Central and Eastern Europe would have endured and continued to reform. There would have been no power vacuum into which communism could have been born. There obviously would have been no Second World War either. All in all, the world would be a far better and different place.

So why did Britain get involved in the First World War?

The Liberals had been in power in the House of Commons since 1906. Their electoral support was withering away and Herbert Asquith's government was on the verge of collapse. It was clear that they went to war partly to keep the Conservative Party from ousting them in the imminent elections. To those who ask if it is possible that any political leaders could be so small minded as to jeopardise the lives of millions, and the good of their nation, merely to keep their political party in power, recent history continues to confirm that just such corrupt, pettiness continues to predominate amongst many who are meant to be civil servants.

Unprecedented

Never before, had so much of mankind been engaged simultaneously in war. Never before had mankind massed such large armies, or produced such weapons which worked wholesale destruction on so gigantic a scale.

The Effects on Germany

The Protestant Faith had originated in Germany. It was the historic centre of Lutheranism. From Germany thousands of Protestant missionaries had gone out to many parts of the world. It was Germany who bore the main brunt of World War I and it was Germany who was crushed and divided by the outcome of World War II. It was chiefly the Protestant sections of Germany which were betrayed into the Soviet zone and subjected to communist oppression. Millions of Germans were forcibly displaced by the Westward movement of Poland's boundary at the end of World War II. Most of these displaced people were Protestants.

The Effects on Britain

The involvement of predominantly Protestant Britain in the two World wars had disastrous repercussions on Christianity in that realm. Throughout the 19th century Britain had been the greatest source of missionaries worldwide and the greatest financiers of missions worldwide. In

both Germany and Great Britain the number of Protestant church members plummeted, missionary involvement declined dramatically and both countries suffered shocking secularisation.

So who benefited from the First World War?

Many bankers and industrialists amassed stupendous wealth at the expense of the combatants who incurred staggering debts. Those who control the debts control everything. Communism benefited the most, seizing and subjugating all of Russia and, in time, most of Eastern Europe.

A Time of Revolution

In the wake of the First World War many came to speak of a post-Christian era. As wars and revolutions threw the entire world into disorder, pessimists and critics predicted the imminent disappearance of Christianity. Yet, against all odds, despite having been dealt what had seemed like a deathblow in its heartland, Protestant Christians showed remarkable vitality.

Recovery

As Christians had overcome the Roman Empire, the Barbarian and Viking invasions, the Arab invasions, the onslaught of the Mongol Empire, the Bubonic plague and the invasions of the Turks, then the upheavals of the French Revolution, Christians adapted and overcame. Christianity experienced dynamic growth in Africa, America, and Asia. Even in Europe, in some of the most unexpected places, behind the Iron Curtain, churches multiplied and faith deepened, despite the most relentless anti-Christian persecution by communist governments.

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The Causes, Consequences and Catastrophe of the First World War - Reformation Society

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Friday, 31 August 2012 16:06 - Last Updated Tuesday, 29 July 2014 11:38

</p> <p style="margin-right: -1.15pt; text-align: justify;">Sources:</p> <p style="margin: 0cm -1.15pt 0.0001pt 14.2pt; text-align: justify; text-indent: -14.2pt;">A History of Christianity, by Kenneth Scott LaTourette, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1953</p> <p style="margin: 0cm -1.15pt 0.0001pt 14.2pt; text-align: justify; text-indent: -14.2pt;">Europe 1815 ♦ 1914, by Ernst Knapton and Thomas Derry, London, John Murray, 1965</p> <p style="margin: 0cm -1.15pt 0.0001pt 14.2pt; text-align: justify; text-indent: -14.2pt;">Best of Enemies ♦ Britain and Germany: Truth and Lies and Two World Wars, by Richard Milton, ICON books, Cambridge, 2007</p> <p style="margin: 0cm -1.15pt 0.0001pt 14.2pt; text-align: justify; text-indent: -14.2pt;">The First World War, by A.J.P. Taylor, Penguin, London, 1985</p> <p style="margin-right: -1.15pt; text-align: justify;">
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