

## Missions in the Modern Era (AD 1800 – Present)

### Review

- During the Middle Ages of missions history (AD 500-1800), missionaries relied heavily on “state sponsorship” in order to gain a foothold in a new place. This carried the risk of martyrdom during times of leadership transition.
- Although originally intended as a means of escape *from* the world, monastic communities became a major means of missionary labors *to* the world as missionaries frequently began by establishing monasteries.
- In the Reformation era, Protestants were far less active on the global stage than Roman Catholics. Roman Catholic missionaries, especially the Jesuits, made pioneering advances/mistakes in what we now call “contextualization.”
- “Reformation mission... [was] a mission to evangelize and teach the established church,” (Smither). However, the Protestant emphasis on vernacular Bible translations would prove very fruitful in the future of missions.

### Key Timeline Events of the Modern Era of Missions

- 1792 – *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* published.
  - Baptist Missionary Society formed with the help of the *Enquiry's* author, Rev. William Carey.
- 1793 – William Carey and his family arrive in India.
- 1795 – London Missionary Society (Congregationalist) formed.
- 1799 – Church Missionary Society (Church of England) formed.
- 1807 – Robert Morrison arrives in China.
- 1810 – American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Congregationalist) founded.
- 1813 – Adoniram Judson begins laboring in Burma (Myanmar).
- 1814 – American Baptist Missionary Board founded.
- 1826 – Reginald Heber, Bishop of Calcutta composed, “Holy, Holy, Holy” to contrast God with the Hindu gods.
- 1837 – Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions (PCUSA) founded.
- 1854 – Hudson Taylor arrives in China.
- 1858 – John Paton arrives in the New Hebrides (Vanuatu).
- 1865 – Hudson Taylor forms the China Inland Mission (CIM).

**NOTE:** From the establishment of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792 until 1960, 80% of Protestant missionaries to the world have been from English-speaking nations!

### William Carey (1761-1834)

- The “Father of Modern Missions,” Carey labored as a ‘cobbler’ (shoemaker) until age 28. He never attended university, but nevertheless studied Greek, Hebrew, and other subjects – either on his own or with friends. One of his great sayings was, “**I can plod. I can persevere in any definite pursuit. To this I owe everything.**”
- “Through reading the *Voyages* of the English explorer Captain James Cook, Carey’s vision for the spiritual needs of the world caught fire. Enamored with data, stories, and maps, Carey placed maps of the world in his shop, which guided him into prayer and deeper study,” (Smither).
- A Calvinistic Baptist, in 1792 Carey published his foundational work, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians*. In his day, many of his fellow Calvinists believed that God would save the pagan peoples of the world in his own way and in his own time. Carey argued strenuously that the Christian church was God’s way and now was the time.
- Later that year, Carey preached a sermon to a gathering of his fellow Baptist ministers in which he uttered his most famous saying: “**Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.**”
- Helping establish the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792, a year later he and his family sailed for India. The Careys suffered much in India: one of their sons died, and Mrs. Carey suffered a permanent mental health breakdown.
- Nevertheless, through many tears and trials their work bore much fruit. In 1800 they joined forces with two other teams, and together this “Serampore Mission” did much pioneering work:
  - **Bible Translation.** Over the next 30 years, the Serampore team contributed to the work of Bible translation in 39 Indian languages: 6 translations of the whole Bible, 23 other complete New Testaments, and portions of the Bible in 10 other languages. Carey himself was responsible for the translations into Bengali, Sanskrit, and Marathi. “Carey is held by the experts to have been the founder of prose literature in Bengali,” (Neill).
  - **Establishing Churches.** From the outset, the Serampore missionaries established a church among themselves, so that they would have a church home in which to welcome new Indian converts.
  - **Evangelism and Preaching.** The Serampore “Ms” conducted preaching tours and established new stations.
  - **Contextualization Studies.** In addition to Bible translation, Carey and his colleagues conducted detailed studies of Hindu literature and culture in order to facilitate gospel communication into Indian thought-forms.
  - **Training Indigenous Leaders.** By 1819, they had established a college to train Indian students and pastors.

**Robert Morrison (1782-1834)**

- Sent by the London Missionary Society to China in 1807, for a time Morrison had to work hard to stay off official radar. In that time, foreigners were forbidden any permanent residence on Mainland China, and it was a capital crime for any Chinese to teach their language to a foreigner.
- By 1809, Morrison's Chinese was proficient to the point that the (British) East India Company hired him as a translator. This gave him a bit of "legal cover," as well as providing him with financial support.
- Morrison's ministry saw only 11 converts. One of these converts, Liang Fah, was later ordained by Morrison – and his colleague William Milne, who had evangelized Liang – as the first Chinese Protestant pastor.
- However, his work in language studies proved foundational for future generations. He not only learned the Chinese language in secrecy; he wrote the first Chinese-English dictionary. Moreover, though some portions had been translated previously, it was Morrison who produced the first complete Chinese translation of the Bible: completing the New Testament in 1813, and adding to it the Old Testament in 1819.
- Frustrated by lack of access to the Mainland and recognizing an opportunity among the Chinese diaspora, in 1818 Morrison and Milne set up a mission station and training college in Malacca (Malaysia).

**Adoniram Judson (1788-1850)**

- Judson's missionary career had a bit of an awkward start. Initially sent out by the Congregationalist ABCFM, he sailed for India. Knowing that his first point of contact in India would be William Carey and the other Baptist missionaries at Serampore, he spent some time on his voyage studying the issue... and became a Baptist. A man of integrity, he resigned his call with the ABCFM, and in 1813 went to Burma (Myanmar) as a Baptist.
- Once arrived in Burma, Judson threw himself into language studies. As his language progressed, he built a Burmese-style *zayat* (fancy, public pavilion) for the sake of conversation, evangelism, and worship.
- In 1824, war broke out between Burma and the British Empire. Although Judson was an American, as an English-speaking foreigner he was jailed for 17 months as a potential spy. Conditions were squalid, and it was only due to the persistent ministry of his wife Ann – who moved into a shack outside the prison – that he survived. The war ended in 1826 and Judson was released, but that same year Ann died of smallpox.
- In addition to direct evangelism, Judson spent much work on Bible translation. By 1834 he had completed the translation of the whole Bible into Burmese, and at the time of his death in 1850 he – like Morrison – had left behind much material for the production of an English-Burmese dictionary.

**John Paton (1824-1907)**

- Paton's career was anything but smooth. Landing in 1858 with his young wife on the island of Tanna in the New Hebrides (Vanuatu), about 3 months later Mrs. Paton gave birth. Both she and the boy died in less than a month.
- The people of Tanna were both pagans and cannibals, yet Paton – now laboring as a widower – learned the language and saw some initial converts. He lived under constant threat to his life and experienced many miraculous deliverances. Yet everything fell apart in 1862, when violent backlash forced him to leave Tanna.
- After time spent abroad raising funds and awareness, Paton and his second wife returned to the New Hebrides in 1866, this time settling on the island of Aniwa. Though the Aniwans were also pagan and cannibal, here the Lord used the Patons to bring about mass-awakening: by the end of their ministry, all of Aniwa had professed Christ.

**J. Hudson Taylor (1832-1905)**

- Arriving in China in 1854, Taylor made waves in the foreign and missionary community with his decision to adopt "native dress" – dressing and cutting his hair like the Chinese, rather than continue to follow the Western style.
- In 1865 Taylor established the China Inland Mission (CIM) with a focus on moving beyond a few coastal cities (which had been accessible to foreign residence since 1842) and taking the gospel into the Chinese interior.
- By 1882, CIM missionaries had visited every province of the Chinese Empire. By 1895, there were 641 CIM missionaries serving in China. By 1934, the CIM was the largest missionary organization in the world.

**Three Great Principles of Modern Protestant Missions**

- 1) **Penetrate:** Ms must take the time to learn the language and culture of their host people.
- 2) **Propagate:** Ms make their contribution to the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church.
- 3) **Perpetuate:** Ms must take steps to pass on their contribution to other Ms or (better) to native Christians.

**Recommended Missionary Biographies**

- Start with Paton's autobiography, *John G. Paton: Missionary to the New Hebrides* (ISBN: 9781845504533).
- Also recommended are Vance Christie's *Adoniram Judson: Devoted for Life* (ISBN: 9781781911471) and John Pollock's *Hudson Taylor & Maria: A Match Made in Heaven* (ISBN: 9781857922233).