Christianity in a New Intellectual Climate
Elements of the New Intellectual Climate

- Developmental science and its various applications
- “Higher criticism” of the Bible and theological liberalism
- Emergence of the United States as a global empire (including foreign missions)
- The ecumenical movement
Developmental Science

- The *Origin of Species* (1859) and biological evolution
- Reaction to Darwin among American Christians
- Applications of evolutionary theory:
  - Spencer, *The Study of Sociology* (1883)
  - Clarke, *Ten Great Religions* (1899)
- Challenges of developmental science to evangelical Christianity

Charles Darwin (1809-1882) developed the theory of biological evolution and began a scientific revolution

Source: www.wikipedia.com
The Higher Criticism of the Bible

- Developed in Germany; available to English-speakers by 1870s
- The “historical critical method”
- Redefined notion of inspiration
- Heresy trials in Protestant seminaries
- New translations of the Bible, esp. American Standard version (1901)

Charles Briggs (1841-1913) was one of the first advocates of higher criticism in U.S. theological education
Classical Protestant Liberalism

1. The immanence of God in nature and history
2. The freedom and potential of humanity
3. The experience of the individual with God (subjectivism)
4. The Bible as the historically conditioned record of people’s experience of God
5. Ethics, not doctrine, is the essence of Christian faith

Following B. J. Longfield, “Protestant Liberalism” in Daniel Reid, et al., The Dictionary of Christianity in America (Intervarsity, 1990), pp. 647-648
The United States as a Global Empire

- Spanish-American War (1898) and American interventionism
- Annexation of the Hawaii (1898) and American Samoa (1899)
- The building of the Panama Canal (1903-1914)
- Purchase of the Virgin Islands (1916)
- World War I (1914-1918) to "make the world safe for democracy"

More than anyone else of the period, Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) embodied American imperialism

Source: www.wikipedia.com
The Growth of American Protestant Foreign Missions

- The Student Volunteer Movement (1886)
- “Missiology” as a discipline of theological study (early 20th c.)
- A new outlet for the religious zeal of Protestant women
- Wider understanding of Christian “vocations” (e.g. medicine, education)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Missionaries</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>443</td>
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<td>1890</td>
<td>958</td>
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<td>1900</td>
<td>4,891</td>
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<td>1910</td>
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<td>1920</td>
<td>10,713</td>
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<td>1925</td>
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The Ecumenical Movement

- Regards as scandalous the disunity of the Christian Church;
- Treats as normative the idea of a unified Church in work and witness (cf. Rom. 15:5-6 and John 17:20-24);
- Works toward the “visible unity” of the Church;
- Considers the world its mission field (Gk. oikoumenkos = “encompassing the whole world”);
- Downplays doctrinal and institutional distinctions in favor of pragmatic programs of cooperation
- Looks forward to the full unity of the eschatological Church
The Development of the Ecumenical Movement

World Missionary Conference (Edinburgh, 1910)

- International Missionary Council (Lake Mohonk, 1921)
- Faith and Order Movement (Lausanne, 1927)

Faith and Order Movement

- Life and Work Movement (Stockholm, 1925)

Life and Work Movement

- World Council of Churches (Amsterdam, 1948)

World Council of Churches

- World Council of Churches (New Delhi, 1961)
The Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy

- The origins and character of fundamentalism
- *The Fundamentals* (1910-1915)
- Increasing polarization in the 1920s (cf. Machen and Matthews)
- The Scopes Trial (1925)
- Institutional differentiation

Princeton theologian B. B. Warfield (1851-1921) was a key spokesperson for early fundamentalism.