

## 26É Ideas about Progress

So, are you figuring all this out?! Are you seeing the big picture? America was growing like your big avocado is growing. But, was it healthy growth? Was America rooting deeper and deeper into the godly principles that had brought success in the first place? Now, you know I've never said that every early American was a believing Christian, but *most* Americans did have a sense that God's basic laws were decent and good, and that they should make themselves behave.

But it seems that success affected the Americans just as it did the Israelites. They began to get a bit full of themselves and were thus less careful to resist the *Godless* ideas of their neighbors. Yes, they thought it safe to ride the bandwagon of European ideas which sounded good to their own minds, no matter what the Bible said about them. Alas, America was now sipping the *progressivism* I mentioned earlier. Since people had tamed great distances with the locomotive and the telegraph, had quelled a few diseases, had eased some of the age-old difficulties of hard farm labor, and had subdued the old governments which had long held people in bondage, they began to think God could retire and they could fix the *rest* of the world's problems! They began to buy into the growing idea that mankind was getting better and wiser all on its own!

Remember! What really matters in history is what God is doing, and what He says is right, good, beautiful, and true. He gives us a choice about whether or not to believe Him, and our choice has a powerful impact on ourselves and our world! That is the power we have...and we have it only because He has given it to us.

There were indeed Americans in the mid-1800s who claimed that only mindless simpletons would now choose to be Christians since anyone 'in the know' had learned God meant for us to take over as soon as we were smart enough. But *here's* the truth: as much as God wants us to be good learners, the smartest thing of all is to admit we can't know as much as God! I'm glad He is bigger and smarter than I can even imagine! That makes Him so great...and so wonderful to 'explore' and obey! And we have the joy of knowing His Word teaches us the secret truths people can't figure out on their own! (Do *ThinkWrite 2* now.)

### *ThinkWrite 2: "Smarty pants!"*

Can you find a verse in the Bible where God tells us that to know and serve Him is the smartest thing we can do?!

Yes, there was a real battle in America and in America's churches, for even many pastors were preaching about the power of human progress, and many well-meaning churchgoers believed what they said! Other folks and their churches rightly saw the Bible's claim—which is always clearly visible—that God alone is the way, the truth, and the life. They also knew that the good things—the progress—which had grown in America came from following His principles to some degree.

For two very different reasons then—either *progressivism* or a passion for God—nonbelievers, Catholics, and Protestants began addressing some of the problems around them. There was an effort to 'reform' the country and help the poor, disabled, and needy. There was even a huge wave of missionary zeal in the church! (It started in England with William Carey.) The first

American missionary to go across the oceans to a foreign land was Adoniram Judson. Many of these missionaries who wanted to serve God with all their hearts had been influenced by the revivals we talked about earlier in this unit! That good seed was bearing more fruit! Keep that in mind, especially since there isn't much reading you need to do in this section. I just wanted you to know about the creeping idea of *progressivism*, even if it is a big word! Got it?

### 26aÉ Charity work—such as by Elizabeth Seton, Dorothea Dix, and Charles Brace

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| <i>Dorothea Dix</i> , by Grace Melin (Childhood of Famous Americans)   | Gr. 1-6  |
| <i>Mother Seton and the Sisters of Charity</i> , by Alma Powers-Waters (Vision)<br>This book is in a distinctly Catholic series.   | Gr. 3-12 |
| * <i>Dorothea Dix</i> , by Barbara Witteman (Let Freedom Ring)   | Gr. 4-8  |
| <i>Angel of Mercy</i> , by Rachel Baker (Messner)  | Gr. 4-12 |
| <i>Dorothea Lynde Dix</i> , by Gertrude Norman   | Gr. 5-12 |
| * <i>Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton: Daughter of America</i> , by Jeanne Grunwell<br>Catholic families would especially enjoy this book from a Catholic publisher. It appears to be for upper-elementary readers. | Unknown  |

### Fiction/Historical Fiction

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| * <i>Roundup of the Street Rovers</i> , by Dave & Neta Jackson (Trailblazer)<br>Fictional kids meet the real Charles Loring Brace, who founded the Children's Aid Society in 1853, the chief sponsor of the Orphan Trains. (We'll meet the kids on the Orphan Trains in the next unit since most of them went to communities in the Great Plains, and we've not yet covered Plains pioneering.) | Gr. 3-8 |
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### 26bÉ Missionary work—such as by Adoniram Judson

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| * <i>Hero Tales: Vol. I</i> , by Dave & Neta Jackson<br>One of the chapters in this first volume covers Judson. | Gr. 3-6  |
| * <i>Adoniram Judson: God's Man in Burma</i> , by Sharon Hambrick   | Gr. 3-7  |
| <i>Fire Upon the Earth</i> , by Norman Langford, Ch. 17b  | Gr. 4-12 |

### Fiction/Historical Fiction

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| * <i>Imprisoned in the Golden City</i> , by Dave & Neta Jackson (Trailblazer)<br>Fictional kids meet real heroes in this much-beloved series! It provides a good introduction to this important missionary, even if it does include fictional children! | Gr. 3-9 |
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1839 was a great year for kids! Baseball and bicycles were invented!!

\**Abner Doubleday*, by Montrew Dunham (Childhood) Gr. 1-6