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we would be true to our Lord and Master in this sphere of our cultural task. If it is to be anything more than theory, we must set to work at practically implementing these goals, learning from each other as we seek to do so.

We need to become much more aware of and attuned to the depth of the problems of our age. Those are nowhere more clearly exposed than in the art forms which our age has produced. However, we should remember that we are brought up in an educational system that is preoccupied with techniques, with the result that it is all too easy to be spiritually blind to the meaning of the art forms that dot our contemporary culture. To rectify this we need many more contributions of the type given by H.R. Rookmaaker.⁴

We need to become proficient in the techniques of the particular art forms with which we are engaged. Without this proficiency it is impossible to develop styles which embody symbolical objectifications that bear faithful witness to Christ's fallen, yet gloriously redeemed, world. However, it is a task requiring specialist training and tuition, involving hours and years of practice and experimenting.

We should work at this task within the community of the Body of Christ, seeking for a revitalization of its life and witness. A more obedient lifestyle on the part of God's people can arise only as we reflect communally upon the fullness of our task in the light of the Scriptures. This applies as much to our artistic life as to any other [p. 40](#) aspect of our life. The hallmark of this communal activity should be a gentle mutual criticism of our efforts. The desire to build personal reputations and the like should have no place within the community of saints; nor should petty, back-biting criticism.

May the grace of God aid us in this and in all our tasks of service unto Christ our Saviour and King.

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The Panama Congress of 1916 and its Impact on Protestantism in Latin America

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THE REASON FOR THE PANAMA CONGRESS

THE rejection by the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh in 1910 of Latin America as a legitimate field for Protestant missions¹ led several delegates who strongly disagreed

⁴ H.R. Rookmaaker, C. Seerveld, W.A. Dryness.

¹ Rouse & Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement* (New York: Westminster, 1954), p. 357.

with this decision to meet privately. Before the conference ended they had appointed a small committee to prepare an *apologia* for Protestant work in Latin America and to pave the way for a new conference which would do for Latin America what the Edinburgh Conference was doing, and would still do, for the rest of the world.² The conference of Foreign Missions in North America sympathised with this *apologia* and called a consultation on evangelical work in Latin America in New York in March 1913. Representatives from 30 different organisations attended and they nominated a 'Committee on Co-operation in Latin America' (CCLA) with the well-known missionary statesman, Dr. Robert Speer, as its chairman.³

One of the first tasks of this committee was to convene a meeting of representatives of organisations working in Mexico to consider the problems arising from the revolution in that country. This meeting was held in Cincinnati, Ohio, on June 30 and July 1, 1914, p. 42 and produced the recommendation that competition and overlapping be eliminated by assigning each organisation to a separate region. Later, similar arrangements were promoted in other countries.⁴ The Committee on Co-operation grew until it included representatives of 30 North American mission boards and societies. A sister committee was formed in Europe and these two committees now addressed themselves to the task of organising a congress on evangelical work in Latin America.⁵

The need for such a congress was very evident. The exclusion of Latin America by the Edinburgh Conference meant that Protestant work in this part of the world was being strongly influenced by missions with no relation to the nascent ecumenical movement. These missions were mostly based on independent churches in the sending countries and the missionaries they were sending out needed to have their vision broadened and their understanding of Latin American history and culture deepened. At the same time, the exclusion of Latin America by the Edinburgh Conference meant that the main-line Protestant churches, especially in Europe, were kept in ignorance of this vast field and there was an urgent need to bring the needs of this neglected continent⁶ to their attention.

THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE CONGRESS

Because of the war, the European committee asked for a postponement, but the North American committee felt that there would be no early end to conflict and that the Congress could not be put off indefinitely. Accordingly the date was fixed for February 10 to 20, 1916. Buenos Aires was considered to be too far for the delegates from the Caribbean, and Rio de Janeiro presented the problem of an additional language; and so Panama, which had become the crossroads of the world since the opening of the canal in 1914, was chosen as the meeting-place. The Congress would have been held in the capital had not the bishop issued a strong protest, proclaiming that those who attended would be guilty

Panama Congress, 1916 (New York: Missionary Education Movement, 1971), Vol. I, p. 6.
William A. Brown, *Toward a United Church* (New York, Scribners, 1946), p. 57.

² *Panama Congress, 1916*, p. 7f.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 8f.

⁴ *Panama Congress, 1916*, p. 10. Webster Browning, *New Days in Latin America* (New York: Missionary Education Movement, 1925), pp. 189–92.

⁵ Brown *op. cit.*, p. 188f.

⁶ For several years this was the title of the magazine produced by the Evangelical Union of South America.

of mortal sin **P.43** and forbidding the use of any building in the capital for such a purpose.⁷ As a result, the meetings were held in the dining room and the ballroom of the recently constructed Tivoli Hotel in the Canal Zone. The majority of the delegates were also lodged in the hotel.⁸

The Committee on Cooperation elected Eduardo Monteverde, professor at the University of Uruguay and active member of the Y.M.C.A. in Montevideo, as Chairman of the Congress, with John R. Mott and Robert E. Speer as Co-chairmen, and Samuel G. Inman as Executive Secretary. The program was very thoroughly prepared. Eight commissions, basing themselves on the studies prepared for the Edinburgh Conference and using the input of correspondents from all parts of Latin America, prepared eight massive papers on the following subjects: Survey and Occupation, Message and Method, Education, Literature, Women's work, The Church in the Field, The Home Base, Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity.

These papers have been included in the official report entitled 'Panama Congress 1916', published in the three volumes by the Missionary Education Movement in New York, and to this day represent an indispensable historical source on the Protestant movement in Latin America. The very thoroughness of these papers did, however, have the disadvantage of giving the delegates the impression that everything worthwhile had already been said. As a result, during the discussions of them, the speakers tended to limit themselves to complimentary remarks, and overlooked an important defect in their preparation, namely, that they were based on studies done for the Edinburgh Conference. Latin America had been excluded by that conference precisely because from a missionary point of view its position was in several ways unique, and too often both in the papers and in the congress speeches examples from mission work in the rest of the world were quoted as if they could be applied to Latin America without critical reassessment. It is interesting that with very few exceptions even the **p.44** native-born Latins in the Congress did not seem to be aware of this problem.

THE NATURE OF THE CONGRESS

The word 'conference' in Spanish carries the connotation of a lecture and so the word 'congress' was chosen in order to stress that this was meant to be a meeting of minds. Altogether 481 persons attended, 230 as official delegates, 74 as visitors officially invited by the Congress, and 177 as day visitors from Panama. Of the official delegates, 159 came from five non-Latin American countries (the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Spain and Italy) and 145 from 18 Latin American countries, but of these 145 only 21 were native Latin Americans.⁹ English was the official language although a few reports were delivered in Spanish or Portuguese. The Congress was, therefore, dominated by missionaries and executives of mission boards. There was a meeting of minds between missions, but in no sense could this be called an ecclesiastical meeting, as Edinburgh undoubtedly was, and only in a minor sense could it be called a transcultural event.

In the succeeding congresses in Latin America this would change increasingly. In Montevideo in 1925, 40 of the 165 delegates were Latin Americans and they played a

⁷ Braga-Monteverde, *Panamericanismo, Aspecto Religioso* (New York: Missionary Education Movement, 1917), p. 85.

⁸ *Ibid. Panama Congress, 1916, op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 26. Harlan Beach, *Renaissant Latin America* (New York: Missionary Education Movement 1916), p. 15.

⁹ Braga-Monteverde, *op. cit.*, p. 87f. Beach, *op. cit.*, p. 14f.

considerable part in the proceedings. At Havana in 1929, over half the 169 delegates were Latin Americans and the program was in their hands. The missionary character of these congresses changed more slowly, however, and an ecclesiastical meeting of the significance of Edinburgh still lies in the future as far as Latin America is concerned.

THE VARIOUS REACTIONS TO THE CONGRESS

The great majority of Protestants in Latin America warmly welcomed the idea of the Congress taking place. According to the available statistics in 1916, there were 285,703 Protestants in full communion in Latin America and 201,896 adherents, but it must be remembered that over half of these totals consisted of British and Dutch subjects living in the Guianas and the Antilles and that **P. 45** over a quarter consisted of German Lutherans in Brazil, the Argentine and Chile. The real Latin American Protestants were a tiny, despised minority who hoped that a congress on this scale might bring them some kind of recognition and perhaps some relief from the persecution to which many of them were still subjected.

Nevertheless, there was also some opposition to the Congress among Protestants. Some ultra-evangelicals felt that it would mark a first step towards an agreement with Rome and opposed it on that score. At the other extreme, there were those who feared that the Congress would act as an irritant to the Roman Catholics and would hinder a better understanding with them.¹⁰ As it turned out, the ultra-evangelicals were proved right, because in spite of clear opposition where matters of principle were concerned, the conciliatory and courteous attitude adopted by the Congress towards the Roman Catholic Church set an example which years later was followed by Evangelicals in Latin America.

The organisers of the Congress had framed the invitation as follows:

'All communions or organisations which accept Jesus Christ as Divine Saviour and Lord, and the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God, and whose purpose is to make the will of Christ prevail in Latin America, are cordially invited to participate in the Panama Congress and will be heartily welcomed.'¹¹

One of these invitations was sent to the bishop of Panama, but this was rejected as pointed out above. However, other elements in the Roman Catholic Church adopted a different attitude. A delegate from Chile told the Congress that on arrival in that country a Roman Catholic bishop had welcomed him with these words:

"We cannot complete the task by ourselves. Besides, we have lost our hold on the people. If you can provide some inspiration **p. 46** for our people then I, for one, would be very happy to give you a part of our work."¹²

The reaction of secular society in Panama was decidedly favourable. *Estrella*, the leading newspaper declared:

'... the religious conference at present in session can only do good. The leaders make a strong and distinguished impression and perhaps they will be able to convince us that

¹⁰ *Panama Congress*, 1916, tomo I, p. 25. Beach, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

¹¹ *Panama Congress*, 1916, tomo I, p. 19.

¹² Beach, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

there are still Christians alive, in spite of the pessimism which today's conditions generate in us.'

On the first evening Dr. Ernesto LeFevre, the minister of Foreign Affairs, addressed words of welcome to the Congress¹³ and on the Sunday evening Dr. Mott gave a moving address entitled "Religious aspects of the European war" at the National Institute of Panama.¹⁴

THE PROGRAM OF THE CONGRESS

The mornings started with inspirational messages and the evenings were reserved for instructional talks. On the first evening after the opening night, three speakers dealt with intellectual problems of the faith, especially the relationship between science and religion. One important aim of the Congress was to encourage the missionaries to give more time and effort to evangelising the educated elite in Latin America and the widespread belief that science had discredited the reliability of the Biblical tradition was thought to be a major obstacle to this goal. On the second and third evenings talks were devoted to the Bible, its distribution, and the revolution it had brought about in some Latin American communities. The Bible undoubtedly played a key role in Protestant evangelisation in Latin America, but it is noteworthy that the Congress hardly mentioned Biblical Criticism. It is true that as yet this played no role among the Protestant churches in Latin America, but it was beginning to affect relationships among the missions and as noted above this Congress was about missions, not churches. **P. 47**

The fourth evening was devoted to the problem of raising Latin American leadership, as vital an issue then as it is now. The fifth evening was devoted to women's work. Because of the *machismo* (male dominance) of the Latin American world, this has always been a very important matter. The sixth evening was given to a consideration of the need of social work in Latin America. In this aspect the Congress was well ahead of its time. On the seventh evening the triumph of the Gospel over individual and collective egoisms was proclaimed, and finally on the evening of February 18, there was a discourse on the dynamic power of the Gospel and ways in which this power could be maintained. Many excellent things were said in this regard, but comparatively little attention was given to the Holy Spirit and his operation. In fact, the Congress did not mention Pentecostalism and in this respect was decidedly not prophetic about what was already happening and would continue to happen on an ever wider scale in Latin America.

In addition, special meetings were held almost every night in the neighboring churches in Panama in which Congress members p. took part. This gave them the opportunity of getting the feel of Protestant churches in Latin America, and at the same time gave these churches the privilege of listening to some of the most distinguished missionary speakers from the North Atlantic community. An afternoon was devoted to an outing to see the Panama canal and right at the end of the Congress a business session was held which gave permanent status to the Committee on Co-operation in Latin America. This committee would have no legislative, but only consultative, functions. The main program of the Congress was, however, filled with the eight great papers to which attention must now be given.

THE CONGRESS PAPERS

¹³ *Panama Congress*, 1916, tome I, pp. 27, 29.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 210f.

The first paper entitled 'Survey and Occupation', started with a description of the colonial background in Latin America and then went on to trace the development of political liberalism in the post-colonial period and the spread of modern education among the upper and middle classes. The effect of liberalism and modern education has been to undermine traditional religious beliefs. Accordingly, the writers of this paper urged that the training of missionaries **P. 48** going to Latin America be improved so that they could reach these higher classes with the Gospel. Basic to this approach was the presupposition that if the Gospel could only be presented to these people in a well-reasoned and attractive way, they would readily accept it.

This paper then went on to stress the need for more social work in Latin America. Apart from the issues of agrarian reform and Marxism, this paper touched on every issue being debated today in connection with the improvement of the lot of the masses. For the Protestant message to be credible, it was necessary not only that it be expressed in terms that were relevant to the practical needs of the people, but that the missions and churches proclaiming it show far more unity among themselves. The writers of this paper realised that mission unity on the field was dependent on more unity on the home front, but they did make a series of practical suggestions for co-operation in the fields of literature, medical work and education. Further, more priority was urged for the training of a native ministry and the indigenisation of the young churches. To lower the costs it was suggested that union seminaries be established in the main centers to which all the missions and churches send their better students. The indigenisation of the young churches required missionaries to relinquish their control over them and to teach them to rely on their own resources of manpower and money. Finally the paper urged missionaries to avoid proclaiming the superiority of the politics and practices of their home countries and warned: 'nothing is more prevalent among Latin Americans than doubt concerning the unselfishness of the United States in her foreign policies.'

The second paper dealt with the message and the method. The message was summarised as follows:

- a. The Bible as the authoritative source of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and his apostles.
- b. The gracious Fatherhood of God—all have access to him.
- c. The person and work of Jesus Christ. No-one can surpass him in making God known. No one has more power with God than him and he is the Head of the Church.
- d. The need to emphasise the essential oneness of the evangelical churches. **p. 49**

The first point was directed at the Catholic emphasis on ecclesiastical tradition; the second at the idea that access to God is via the priesthood and the sacraments; the third at an exaggeration of the role of the Virgin Mary; and the fourth at the largely justified Catholic taunt of disunity among the Protestants. Given the situation, it was understandable that the Congress should formulate the message needed as an alternative to the form of Christianity which had had exclusive rights in Latin America for four centuries. Nevertheless it is unfortunate that the message was not also formulated in such a way as to make clear its relevance to the practical problems of this part of the world. A gap was thus established between the message the Congress advocated and its call for social action, and, in the years following, some Protestant churches in Latin America devoted themselves more and more to social action,¹⁵ while others restricted themselves to immediate, practical needs.

¹⁵ J.B.A. Kessler, *A Study of the Older Protestant Missions and Churches in Peru and Chile* (Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1967), pp. 93, 133.

As far as the method of propagating the Gospel was concerned, this second paper advocated reverent services, attractive buildings and a social application of the message. Again, the idea was to win the intelligentsia. The missions of the mainline denominations which by and large adopted the recommendations of this Congress soon acquired a middle class image in Latin America. They developed a social concern, it is true, but it was a concern directed at the poor instead of being a concern which took the poor as their starting-point, as had been the case when these missions started their work in Latin America.¹⁶

The discussion of this paper produced some interesting contrasts. Some of the Latin delegates felt that the best manner of helping the Catholic church was to oppose it, and even at times to attack it. Other Latins at the Congress felt that the Catholics should be won and not antagonised. There was also a divergence among the Anglo-Saxon delegates, but in their case about social work. Some fully supported the social emphasis of the first and second papers, but others warned of the danger of turning missions into a civilising rather than a regenerative force. Finally John R. Mott, the ecumenical p. 50 pioneer, gave a magnificent address in which he appealed for united evangelistic campaigns which would mobilise the membership of all the churches for witness to their respective nations. Forty years later his vision found its realisation in the Evangelism in Depth campaigns held in various Latin American republics.

The third paper dealt with education. It was noted that mission schools which had tried to proselytise had failed, while schools which had given priority to raising the standard of education had generally speaking been successful. According to a Brazilian pastor, the failure of the proselytising schools was due to their imitation of the education methods used by Christian schools in the Far East because they hid their proselytising aims and yet insisted that their pupils attend religious services in school, and, perhaps more than anything else, because the small minority of evangelical children in them meant that the general atmosphere was at variance with their aim. Unfortunately the report did not really discuss the need of education among the poor. In part this was due to the preoccupation with teaching the better classes and in part because they assumed that an improvement in the general level of education would automatically benefit the poor. Neither they, nor anyone else at that time, realised sufficiently the extent to which oppressive structures could continue to hold down the poor, even if some of these poor did, by means of scholarships, receive better education. It is a pity that the report gave no attention to the Adventist work, already in progress round Lake Titicaca in which many of these problems were being creatively approached.¹⁷ Finally the paper emphasised the need for evening schools, and for technical and agricultural education.

The fourth paper dealt with literature. It admitted openly that much of the Protestant literature was ineffective because it had been translated directly from the English. For instance, Biblical allusions might be understood in an Anglo-Saxon setting but they were often meaningless in Latin America. Accordingly the report strongly urged that more attention be given to raising up Latin American authors. The report also urged the production of serious literature to reach the more educated. Finally, as might be expected, the report strongly urged the need for greater p. 51 collaboration in the field of literature; in fact it went so far as to propose the establishment of a single editorial board for the whole of Latin America. John Ritchie, a missionary of the Evangelical Union of South

¹⁶ Remark made by Dr. Orlando E. Costas at the CEHJLA symposium in Panama in December 1976.

¹⁷ Kessler, *op. cit.*, pp. 23–37.

America working in Peru, effectively protested that many operators of Evangelical bookstores in South America would not be willing to submit to that degree of control.

The fifth paper dealt with women's work. Again the need of reaching the more cultured ladies was emphasised. To this end it was urged that both the educational program and the buildings of the Protestant schools be improved. The need for hostels for young ladies near the teacher training colleges was also brought forward.

The sixth paper was entitled 'The Church in the Field'. A more even geographical distribution of missionaries was recommended, and in particular, if a certain mission or church had started work in a region, it was strongly urged that new missions enter unoccupied areas first before going to the same region. The report noted that various churches had been founded as a result of the reading of the Scriptures alone and that such churches usually developed better than those where a missionary was working. It was also noted that not sufficient responsibility had been given to upcoming Latin leaders, and so a general recommendation was made that missionaries abstain from accepting posts of leadership in the national churches except where this was inevitable. According to the compilers of this report, the key to the development of the work lay in achieving self-support for the congregations. Some Latin American pastors were known to be opposed to promoting self-support for fear that their members would come to consider them as their paid servants. The report therefore recommended the installation of voluntary as well as paid workers in the congregations. It is a pity that this report did not consider the apprenticeship training of church workers and leaders as it was then being developed by the Pentecostals in Chile and Brazil, but it is probable that at that time no one outside these movements was aware of what was happening.

The report on the 'Church in the Field' also gave consideration to the attitude which missionaries and national workers should adopt towards social injustices and political problems in Latin p. 52 America. It was agreed that it was impossible for missionaries or national workers to keep quiet if religious liberty was being endangered or when indigenous tribes were being threatened with extinction, but in all other cases the missionaries in particular were urged to act with extreme caution. The reason was not any desire to condone these other injustices, but the realisation that the intervention of foreigners in matters which were considered to be internal would probably have the opposite effect of that which was desired.

The seventh report dealt with the 'home base', or what today would be called the sending countries. The compilers lamented the ignorance about Latin America in most North American circles and urged that more be done to educate the home base. The compilers also complained that relatively few North American missionaries were going to Latin America, but, according to the Congress report, between 1907 and 1914 from 12% to 16% of all the North American missionary candidates went to Latin America, hardly justifying such complaints. It must be remembered that at that time vast areas which are today closed for missionaries were still open.

The eighth report dealt with co-operation and the promotion of unity. Up to a point this paper repeated and reinforced what had been said in the earlier papers, but some interesting new thoughts were added. First, that among Protestants the barrier to cooperation lay not between churches, but between the missions of the established churches and the non-denominational missions, or, as we would call them today, the 'faith missions'. Secondly, that even then the barrier between Protestants and Catholics did not lie on a personal level at which there existed many good friendships, but on an institutional one.

THE GENERAL INFLUENCE OF THE CONGRESS ON MISSIONARY WORK IN LATIN AMERICA

In one sense the influence of the Congress was very important. Not only did the printed report provide many missionaries with the first comprehensive picture of Protestant work in Latin America, but the Congress itself stimulated the convening of a series of congresses on a continental scale which have done much to give the **P. 53** Protestant movement and its national leaders the self-confidence they possess today. The immediate practical aims of the Congress did not, however, fare so well. The mission boards of the established churches which were working in Latin America did their best to put the Congress recommendations into effect and their failure was due to factors of which those who gathered in Panama were largely unaware. It is therefore necessary to consider the attempts to implement the four main aims of the Congress in some detail.

THE EFFORT TO EVANGELISE THE EDUCATED CLASSES

Many of the delegates to Panama believed if only the Gospel presentation in Latin America could be improved, that many of the educated Latins would accept. They based their optimism on the great interest being shown at that time in the Gospel by middle and upper class people who kept on saying that if only the Protestants could improve and beautify their places of worship and raise the standard of their ministry they would be delighted to attend. No doubt the Protestant churches were dingy and many of the preachers uneducated, but the fact remains that in the years before the Panama Congress when the prestige of the Protestant movement was at its lowest, the willingness of middle and upper class Latins to attend the services was higher than for many years afterwards.

In 1905 John Jarrett, a missionary working in Cuzco, moved to Arequipa in southern Peru to take advantage of the considerable liberal agitation taking place at that time against the ecclesiastical domination in that city. With great difficulty he managed to hire a very inferior room, but for a time many distinguished people visited the services.¹⁸ Eleven years of experience in Peru had, however, given Jarrett considerable insight into the true situation and he reported to his board in London that these distinguished people did not come to be converted, but to add force to their protest against the political domination of the Catholic church.¹⁹ The greater the success of the Protestant services, the bigger was their leverage on the Catholic hierarchy. **p. 54**

The Panama Congress noted correctly in its reports that, as education advanced in Latin America, so did people abandon the Catholic faith. The assumption made was that if the Gospel was presented to them in such a way as not to violate their scientific and other knowledge, then they would return to the faith. This overlooked the fact, however, that people who received some education reacted against the Catholic faith not usually in the first place because of any intellectual difficulty, but because of their desire to rid themselves of ecclesiastical domination. Such people were not, with some glorious exceptions, willing to submit to a new and far more stringent Lordship of Christ in their lives. In other words, the vision people had in Panama of being able to reach the upper classes was largely an illusion. Not only did this vision absorb energies (mostly in the form of the establishment of elitist schools) that might well have been better spent on the poor,

¹⁸ Kessler, *La Historia de la Iglesia Evangelica en Arequipa*, unpublished document, 1974.

¹⁹ McDonald Hennell's information to the writer, based on Hennell's study of confidential minutes in London.

but Protestant unity was sacrificed for it as well. One of the reasons that missions from the established churches hesitated to co-operate with the non-denominational missions was the fear that the somewhat brash way in which the latter presented the authority of the Gospel and of the Bible, would frighten away the educated people the former were trying to reach.

THE DESIRE TO UNIFY THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

During his visit to Peru in 1917, Mr Guy Inman, the secretary of the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America, was disturbed to note how few national leaders had been trained up to that time. He recommended that the evening study classes that Ritchie had started several years earlier be extended and made a co-operative effort. Indeed, during the years 1917 and 1918 combined classes did take place in which John Mackay of the Free Church of Scotland, Methodist missionaries and John Ritchie all helped, but after this the effort stopped.²⁰ No doubt Ritchie's illness had something to do with it, but the basic reason for the stoppage was the growing tension between the Methodists on the one hand and Ritchie on the other. In 1921 the Methodists started their own training institute but were forced to discontinue it some years later. P. 55 Ritchie's efforts to restart a training program of his own failed, and only in 1930 were the Evangelical Union of South America, the Free Church of Scotland and the Christian and Missionary Alliance able to start what is now the Lima Evangelical Seminary.

In some other countries the effort to start a united seminary had more success. A Union seminary started in 1914 by the Methodists and the Presbyterians in Santiago, Chile, lasted till 1930 and in Buenos Aires a Union Theological Seminary whose roots go back to 1884 continues to function today, as does the Evangelical Seminary in Puerto Rico started in 1919. Nowhere, however, was a lasting theological institute possible in which both missions from established churches and the so-called non-denominational missions participated. Generally speaking, the missions from the established churches had the professors and the non-denominational missionaries had the students, but the theological and ideological differences between these two groups proved to be too big an obstacle. It is unfortunate, therefore, that the Congress glossed over these differences in its desire to emphasise 'the essential oneness of the evangelical churches'.

THE ATTEMPT TO GIVE A SOCIAL DIMENSION TO MISSION WORK IN LATIN AMERICA

In the years following the Congress, the Methodists tried most consistently to apply the Gospel to the social needs of the Latin American republics. By this time, however, they had become a lower middle class church with the result that their social efforts were directed at the poor instead of trying to involve the poor. In addition, during the 20s and the 30s, Methodist missions were decidedly influenced by theological modernism and slackened their evangelistic efforts.²¹ As a result of both these factors they remained a relatively small church in Latin America, and the hard fact is that church growth is needed to be able to exercise social influence.

Other missions looking at the Methodists came to identify social involvement with theological modernism and this made several of them eliminate social outreach from their

²⁰ Kessler, *A Study of the Oldest Protestant Missions ...*, p. 174.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

stated aims. In 1928 the board of the Evangelical Union of South America in London defined its aims as follows: p. 56

Our sole objective as a society was that of the winning of men and women to a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and the gathering of these into Christian churches on a New Testament basis with no qualifications or limitations of a denominational character.²²

This statement was somewhat absurd because at the time it was made, the mission in question had hospitals, midwifery programs, schools, orphanages and at least one large experimental farm in Latin America. Furthermore, this mission has continued to provide most of these services up to the present in spite of the fact that it has been amply demonstrated that these activities are rather ineffective means of winning people to Christ, at least when practiced in the way that most missions practiced them. Unlike the Methodists, the 'faith missions' were in touch with the poor but, because they had eliminated social outreach from their objectives, they only involved these poor in evangelism, leaving the missionaries to attend to the schools, hospitals, orphanages and farms. The reason that the 'faith missions' continued to work in social outreach was because the missionaries instinctively realised that it was impossible for a Christian to live in a Latin American situation and do otherwise, but they never realised that this applied equally to the poor converts they were winning. The result was that the social work done by the 'faith missions' was also directed at the poor and did not involve them. The great exception to this was the work done by the Adventists around Lake Titicaca where from the start they made the Indians who came to their central school pass on the lessons given in subsidiary schools throughout the region. They also made the Indians take part in the medical program, with the result that the Adventists made an important social impact and achieved rapid church growth as well.²³

THE EFFORT TO PROMOTE PROTESTANT UNITY

This was the main aim of the Congress and in the ensuing years efforts were made to establish local committees on co-operation in as many republics as possible. As far as comity arrangements were concerned real progress was made. For instance, in Peru P. 57 a committee was established in 1917 with Ritchie as its chairman, which assigned the north of the country to the Free Church of Scotland Mission, the center to the Methodists and the south to the Evangelical Union of South America. Unfortunately this arrangement started coming apart almost as soon as it was made. Ritchie, who was working with the Evangelical Union of South America, had been instrumental in establishing a series of congregations in central Peru by means of tracts sent through the post. When he signed the above-mentioned agreement he should have advised these congregations to join with the Methodists, but instead he stoutly defended the right of these new congregations to choose between the Methodists and the new denomination which was being formed under his ministry. The result was that two denominations were established often in the same town in central Peru and years of rivalry ensued.

If Ritchie felt that he could not advise nascent congregations which denomination they should join he should not have signed the comity agreement, much less have been

²² McDonald Hennell's information to the writer based on Hennell's study of the November 1928 Evangelical Union of South America's Board minutes.

²³ Kessler, *A Study of the Older Protestant Missions* ..., pp. 238-40.

chairman of the committee on co-operation. The immediate problem lay in Ritchie's belief that the comity arrangements applied to the missionaries but not to the national Christians. At a deeper level lay the problem why two tiny denominations, one still in the process of formation and both still suffering persecution, should find it necessary to compete with each other when vast tracts of country were still unevangelised. The reason was the same as that which made united theological education impossible, namely, the incompatibility between church-based and faith missions. The Congress report clearly mentioned this problem, but evidently it was felt that it could be overcome. The fact is that although in other countries developments may not have been as dramatic as in Peru, nowhere was this barrier really overcome in Latin America. In view of the fact that the compilers of the Panama reports were basing themselves on the experience of the Edinburgh Conference, it is justified then to ask why they were so naive on this point.

The answer lies in the difference between Latin America and the non-Christian mission fields with which Edinburgh was dealing. In non-Christian countries, Christian groups with differing interpretations of the Bible still found it possible to co-operate because the differences among themselves were small compared with the differences with the religions surrounding them. In Latin p. 58 America, however, the various Protestant groups found themselves confronted with a Catholicism which in theory accepted the Bible as the rule of faith just as they did. The major differences between Protestant groups were thus of the same order of magnitude as the differences between the Protestants and the Catholics. In other words, the situation in Latin America at the time of the Panama Congress resembled much more that of Europe at the time of the Reformation than that of the non-Christian countries being studied at the Edinburgh Conference. The incompatibility between the Lutherans and the Calvinists on the one hand and the Anabaptists on the other should, therefore, have been a warning to the compilers of the Panama reports that the lack of co-operation between church-based and faith missions was a major problem indeed, and that it was useless to emphasise 'the essential oneness of evangelical churches'.

A by-product of the Edinburgh Conference was the formation of the 'Faith and Order' movement to study and analyse the differences between Christian churches with a view first to understanding these differences and then to overcoming them. It is a pity that the Panama Congress did not recommend the same thing for the Protestant church in Latin America.

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Ethics and the Old Testament: a Functional Understanding of Law

by CHRISTOPHER WRIGHT

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