

# THE MISSIONARY REVIEW

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# The Missionary Review of the World

AN ILLUSTRATED MONTHLY RECORD OF PROGRESS AND OPPORTUNITY IN WORLD-WIDE CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

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# THE MISSIONARY REVIEW



## OF THE WORLD



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Vol. XXVIII, No. 11  
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### SIGNS OF THE TIMES

#### CALLS TO PRAYER

NEVER have there been more urgent and incessant calls to sacrificial prayer, service, and giving than there are to-day.

In Europe, Asia, and Africa there are the millions of struggling, dying men giving their lives for what they believe to be the call of duty and humanity—some of them believe they are answering the call of God. There are the physicians and nurses caring for the wounded, and the chaplains and other Christian workers distributing Testaments and booklets to those in trenches, hospitals, and prison-camps. These are unusual opportunities which are bringing rich results in conversions. There are the appeals from Persia and Turkey for the intervention of God and for human help to relieve the distress of widows, orphans, and other destitute thousands.

In Mexico, tho there is talk of recognizing General Carranza, there still seems small hope for permanent peace through any of the contending forces. All of the leaders are inefficient and self-seeking. The country is being desolated, and the outlook for good government is dark. It is time to pray that God's solution of the problem may be discovered and followed.

In China, the hoped-for reforms under the republic have been only slightly successful. A new convention is to be called early next year to decide the question as to whether China shall or shall not return to a monarchy.

In India there is native unrest, and German missions are almost at a standstill through the internment of those in charge of the work. Africa is, in many parts, a battle ground, where the natives see their white

The editors seek to preserve accuracy and to manifest the spirit of Christ in the pages of this REVIEW, but do not acknowledge responsibility for opinions expressed, nor for positions taken by contributors of signed articles in these pages.—EDITORS.

# The Latin-American Congress\*

BY REV. CHARLES L. THOMPSON, D.D., LL.D., NEW YORK

Chairman of the Commission on Unity and Cooperation of the Congress on Christian Work in Latin America



THE events of the last few years have made a new American map. The finishing of the greatest engineering achievement in all our history has reconstructed our geography.

North and South America, united geologically by continuous mountain ranges, are now bound by the living ties of commerce, and social and educational interest as well as by common political ideals. It is therefore important that they should understand each other religiously, and that by both of them common standards of Christian thought and life should be accepted. For such is going to be their unity in all other respects that for their common welfare the same ethical and Christian ideals should be acknowledged and made effective among all the people.

It is in no spirit of superiority that we own the fact that to North America there came a type of life, and an inheritance of reformation truth, denied to South America. It is no reflection upon South America for them and us all to own the fact that, whereas the upper half of the continent was settled and occupied by men of sturdy religious convictions, who sought only a home where they and their descendants might enjoy civil and religious freedom, the lower half of the continent

was explored and conquered in a lust for gold and glory. Its people in large measure have failed of the impulse for noble living which comes by a noble inheritance. If we have inherited high moral ideals it is not to our praise, but it constitutes a reason why we should share them with others less fortunate.

It is this appeal which may be confidently made and which will be a mighty leverage in the endeavor to lift to higher levels and purer forms of Christian truth people who have been made cold or indifferent by the formalities of religion without its spirit.

It is to be hoped, therefore, that the mind open to recognize elements of truth and goodness in any form of faith will characterize the Panama Conference. While from the prevailing religion of Latin America as an institution we may not expect much welcome or cooperation, yet doubtless there are many individuals, nominally or by inheritance attached to that faith, who will give us welcome in our program and help at least along some lines of Christian advance. Even as in the United States such help is given in matters of temperance and social reform, so it is believed it will be in Latin America. Indeed, we have been assured by men high in civic authority in South America that an approach to those republics—not in a way of

\* From the tenth to the twentieth of February next there will be held in the City of Panama a Congress of all missionary societies working in Latin America. It is the purpose of this paper briefly to state the reasons for such a gathering—its scope and the ends it is hoped it may serve.

condescension, but of helpfulness to better enable people to carry burdens which they realize are too great for them—will be welcomed. Let us then manifest an eager readiness to cooperate with any who will unite with us on any plane of the great Christian enterprise. Let us not demand cooperation in the entire program as a condition of accepting affairs for any part of that program.

There are two other important reasons for considering our Christian duty to Latin America. First: There are probably forty thousand students in her various universities—of most of whom it may truly be said that the doctrines and ceremonies of religion to which they have been accustomed no longer make any strong appeal to them. But they are to be the leaders of thought and action for all those republics. The future of those republics will be determined largely by them. If they become skeptics, or totally indifferent to all religious questions, it will bode no good for the future of those lands. If we have a message that will appeal to inquiring minds, and if we can open up to them possibilities of a higher life than any that now seems open, we will be doing much for the stability and permanence of Latin-American institutions.

Again, there are eight million Indians in Latin America for whose spiritual life almost nothing is now being done. We do not forget that there was a time when Jesuit and Franciscan priests did heroic service in their behalf and lifted many of them out of their age-long barbarism. But those priests have few successors now. From many min-

isters of religion the people would get little help, because their lives so definitely contradict their preaching. The same spirit which sends us as missionaries to barbarians across oceans should impel our steps to the helpless and hopeless savages of South America.

This much as to the mission field of Latin America as a reason for calling the Congress. Two further reasons pertain to what is called the home base. In the first place, the Christian Church of North America has not seriously considered her great opportunity in the southern half of the continent. Here are seventy millions of people—our neighbors, our allies in republican principles, inheritors with us of many of the fundamental principles of Christianity—to whom our contribution of educational and religious forces has been almost negligible. And yet, they with us must determine the destiny of the new world. They, without us, can not shape that destiny. It is equally true we without them can not worthily shape that destiny. Especially now—when the civilization of the old world seems to be going bankrupt—now is the time for America to manifest a solidarity of peace and Christian brotherhood which may be this dark world's final hope.

Again—even the little that has been done for the spiritual uplift of Latin America has lacked the statesman's view and program. More than a score of missionary societies have carried on work but often feebly manned and supported and without coordination with each other. There have been many soldiers—but not an army. The spirit of cooperation be-

tween denominations has been largely absent. Nor has there been any such general and united consideration of the vast field and its many problems as alone would supply the knowledge and the program necessary for effective advance. In the hope of such consideration and such action following as will write a new day of progress in Latin America this Congress is called.

Now, as to its scope.—As in Edinburgh, eight commissions have been appointed to consider the main subjects pertaining to missionary work. These commissions, appointed last winter by a general committee representing all the societies doing work in Latin America, have given diligent consideration to the themes committed to them. They have conducted most extensive correspondence with missionaries and others in all the republics, and have studied as carefully as they could the social, educational, moral and religious conditions. They have also had conferences with leaders in the political life of some of the republics. From these wide surveys they are making up their findings, which will be reported first to the workers in the various fields for criticism and correction, and finally in printed volumes will be presented to the Congress at Panama in February.

While Latin America is behind in the march of American progress, even the steps it is taking are handicapped by serious failures in some directions. Thus, all the governments are republican; some of them of an advanced type. Those farthest from North America have made the greater progress—as Chile, Argentina, and Brazil. But their future

is hampered, if not imperilled, by the low average of intelligence. Illiteracy ranges from 40 to 80 per cent. Of course there are many educated and cultured people. There are circles in their great cities which will compare well with like circles anywhere. But the safety of a republic depends on the diffusion of intelligence. For lack of it there have been many small revolutions in South America. They who would best help Latin America to a surer progressive civic life must inspire a deeper desire for general education and must lead the way in securing it. The matter of popular education should, therefore, have large attention at Panama. And in this the Congress will have cordial welcome and hearty support from the leaders of national life in all the republics.

Moral character is, of course, another foundation stone of the life of a republic. In many parts of Latin America the morals of the people are at low ebb. It does not indeed become us to cast stones. We have too many sins of our own. A prominent South American said to the writer, "The social life I witnessed in some of the New York hotels would not be tolerated in Buenos Aires." That is the call for home mission work in the United States, and it is loud and urgent. But so is the call in Latin America. That the types of sin are somewhat different (and each nation seems to furnish its own brand) does not make the national peril less. South America needs what North America needs—the Gospel of Christ. Only that can finally lift the moral level. If a facing of moral conditions as they exist in many parts of Latin

America shall stimulate the Christian Church here and there to more united and persistent efforts, there will be fewer revolutions in Latin America and surer national progress.

One of the most important questions the Panama Congress will have to face is why, after fifty years of Protestant mission work in Latin America, the fruit of it is so inconspicuous. Separate denominations, operating each in its little corner, have been more or less content with what they have done, and have had no just conception of how little impress Protestant Christianity has really made on the life of Latin America. When in more statesman-like fashion they get together to survey the whole vast field, they will be forced to see that their small gains are scarcely visible among the seventy millions of the population.

Along with that fact will come the further conviction that some new methods not only must be adopted but an entire new alignment of Christian forces must be had. Then they will see that their science of the missionary propaganda has been radically wrong in this respect—that they are in the presence of a unified Church, while their own forces are hopelessly divided and often at variance with each other. Instead of antagonizing a unified Church, because associated in our minds with teachings we can not accept, it were far wiser to see in it an ideal that may be worth striving for. Instead of combating such an ideal, were it not far better to make of it an appeal for a reorganization of Protestant forces? We have failed to conquer with our divided lines. Let us try the effect of united

columns. Missions among non-Christian people have given us a lesson we may well learn and apply in Latin America. If in China and Japan bodies differing in doctrine and polity can get together as a united Church, surely on this continent we should be able to do the same. Latin America furnishes a fine field for such an experiment. Its languages are few, its people homogeneous, its ecclesiastical history, tho sad, is suggestive. It is to be hoped, therefore, that a spirit of the utmost cooperation will rule the proceedings at Panama. It is our only hope for impressing ourselves or our message on peoples accustomed to a united Christian front.

Doubtless a consideration of educational problems, for example, will make it plain that in all grades a combination of different denominations can do far more creditable and appealing work. A few great institutions in each republic will be far better than a score of feebly supported schools. Even union theological education is not beyond an easy possibility, as Porto Rico and Japan and China have revealed.

The time has come on every mission field at home and abroad when denominations must get together and work together, or be at a hopeless disadvantage in comparison with the world's great enterprises in all other realms. Christ's prayer "That they all may be one" is coming to its answer. May the Panama Congress be bold to accept the fact and head all its program for Latin America toward that divine ideal. Then it will mark the mightiest advance that the Kingdom of Christ on this continent has ever known.