

Teaching Christian Mission in an Age of World Christianity:

A Reflection on the Centenary of the 1916 Panama Congress

PHILIP WINGEIER-RAYO, PH.D.

Introductions

I would like to thank Dr. Angel Santiago-Vendrell and the Association of Professors of Mission (APM) leadership team for the invitation to share today on the topic “Teaching Mission in an Era of World Christianity.” This is a provocative topic that brings to mind such questions as: What does it mean to teach mission today? What did it mean to teach mission in the past? What is it in relationship to world Christianity? What is teaching mission like today relative to itself, for example 100 years ago? Any of these questions would be worthy pursuits, however I do not have the time or space to address all these questions today, and so I will focus on the last two, namely: What is mission in relation to world Christianity, specifically Latin American Christianity, and how does teaching mission today compare to 100 years ago? I say 100 years ago even though the APM was only founded 64 years ago and the teaching of mission goes back further. I will begin with my experience teaching mission and world Christianity in higher education. The bulk of the paper, however, will be on Christian Mission a hundred years ago and the transition to World Christianity—primarily reflecting on the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Panama Congress as an example of mission at the time. In this paper I will posit that over the last 100 years since the Panama Congress, teaching mission has shifted in its understanding of ecumenism, seen the contribution of indigenous churches and placed more emphasis on what God is doing through the Holy Spirit.

Before I begin I would like to say a word about ecumenism and how I will use certain terms. The Association of Professors of Mission is one of the few spaces where missiologists can gather outside our individual tribes and discuss the big picture. Having worked and studied Roman Catholic, conciliar and evangelical churches, I have come to respect the contributions that each make to the reign of God, but there are too few spaces where we can all be in the same place to dialogue. I will never forget the 2014 gathering of the European Missiological Conference held in the Sofia Conference Center of the Russian Orthodox Church in Helsinki, Finland. As you know, the Nordic countries are famous for their nude saunas followed by a plunge into an icy cold pool. If you go to a conference in the UK you have afternoon tea. If you go to the Middle East you have Turkish coffee. At the Panama Congress they had a siesta break in the schedule. Well, in Finland, every afternoon in the schedule was a sauna break. After a full day of tense ecumenical discussions about evangelical incursions into Eastern Orthodox lands, nothing seemed to place our doctrinal and missiological differences into perspective like having Orthodox, intentionality of rotating positions between Roman Catholic, conciliar and evangelical candidates. Nevertheless I acknowledge that I am Protestant and this inevitably will inform my interpretation of the following events.

In keeping of the APM/ASM tradition I will use the term “conciliar” to refer to historical Protestant denominations with one caveat. In Spanish, the generic term “*evangélico*” is inclusive of mainline Protestants, evangelicals and Pentecostals. And although it is beyond the scope of this paper, I argue in other places that Pentecostals are deserving of their own category aside from evangelical.¹

Teaching Christian Mission in an Age of World Christianity: Personal Experience and Reflections

I am fortunate in my career to have served as a practitioner first and subsequently as a missiologist—as have many of you. In 2003 I returned from 15 years of missionary service in Latin America and the Caribbean and joined academia. In my academic career I have taught at a small church-related university, a large divinity school connected to a university, and now a conciliar seminary in the United States, giving me a broad variety of experiences and perspectives with which I approach this topic. At my first academic post in the States, much to my surprise, my dean invited me to develop an undergraduate and graduate program in missions. Up to this time I was a practitioner and not privy to the latest higher education trends or jargon in academia. So I consulted with some mission leaders and searched school websites. I would name some and I’m sure most are represented in this room, but my memory is sketchy and I would probably leave someone out. I would, however, like to take a moment of privilege and lift up the name of John Nuessle, who was very generous with his time and knowledge during my research. John was a mission executive with Global Ministries in New York and was one of the first executives to accept the invitation to join and regularly attend ASM. John passed away June 8th at the age of 63. He will be missed, but his passion for missions will be carried on.

As I had these conversations and studied the various programs in the field, I noticed a shift away from the term “Christian Missions” toward more neutral terms such as “intercultural studies” at Asbury Theological Seminary and Biola University, for example. Pfeiffer ultimately decided to name its undergraduate major the more traditional name of “Christian Mission” even as other schools were going the opposite direction. For example, in 2002–2003 Fuller was in the process of changing the name of the School of World Mission to the School of Intercultural Studies. In her 2015 APM plenary presentation Elizabeth Glainville identified the impetus for Fuller’s name-change as coming from its graduates who were serving in no access countries and needed a less “religious” sounding degree on their

1 See “A Third Phase of Christianity: Reflections on 100 Years of Pentecostalism in Mexico,” chapter in Vinson Synan, Amos Yong, and Miguel Alvarez, eds., *Global Renewal Christianity: Latin American Spirit-Empowered Movements: Past, Present, and Future, vol. II: Latin America*, Lake Mary, Fla.: Charisma House Publishers, 2016.

diplomas.² Resistance to Fuller's name change came from older faculty and some trustees who felt that it would take the school away from its "initial and primary purpose."³ "What's in a name?" was the topic for last year's gathering, so for those of you who were unable to attend I refer you to the proceedings in *First Fruit* for a fuller review (no pun intended). My purpose here is not to duplicate Glainville's paper or last year's topic, rather I refer to this name-change only as it transitions smoothly to this year's theme (kudos to the organizers). I believe that Fuller's name change was not random, rather that it was representative of a trend. There was/is something bigger happening in the study of religion, namely a move from the sacred to the secular, from the biblical to the scientific, from the Euro-centric to the global, from modernity to the post-modern and post-colonial, and from Christian Mission to global Christianity.

Still very new to the field I joined the AAR began attending the AAR/SBL annual meeting. My first annual meeting was in 2002. No sooner had I joined that I learned of plans to de-couple the two guilds annual meetings. The initiative came from Professor of Religious Studies at Harvard University and AAR president in, 2003, Robert Orsi, who acted upon sentiments within the AAR that the SBL was too dominated by Christian practitioners and therefore lacked the objectivity of social scientists. Orsi argued in his 2004 presidential address: "We need to engage the history of the study of religion in the United States more critically than we have done, at the same time recognizing how deeply we are in the debt of earlier scholars."⁴ The AAR began as an off-shoot of the then National Association of Biblical Instructors in 1963 and this split was the latest move toward objectivity. This sentiment was also present in the trend to re-name university religion departments to religious studies. This trend sped up considerably after 9/11 with greater interest in non-Western religions and Islam in particular. Nevertheless practical and economic concerns from the individual members and institutions that make up the two organizations pushed the AAR and SBL to reconsider the split. Publishing houses, philanthropic organizations, and hiring institutions were forced to either choose or attend two conferences to meet their constituencies. In 2010 the leadership of the AAR and SBL signed a letter of intent to "enhance cooperation, not competition, between the organizations" and they both agreed to have concurrent annual meetings in the same city and began this practice in November 2011 in San Francisco.⁵ The underlying differences between the two guilds still exist, however the practical and economic concerns forced them to have overlapping meetings.

2 Elizabeth Glainville, "Name Change at Fuller's School of World Mission to School of Intercultural Studies," Association of Professors of Mission, *First Fruits*, June 18-19, 2015, 14.

3 *Ibid.*, 19.

4 Robert Orsi, "A New Beginning, Again," presidential address to the 2003 AAR annual meeting, Religious Studies, Oxford University Press, Vol. 74, No. 3, September 2006, 589.

5 American Academy of Religion, <https://www.aarweb.org/annual-meeting/aar-sbl-annualmeetings-letter-of-intent> (accessed May 30, 2016)

In 2009 I was asked by the president of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Phil Amerson, to form part of a task force to re-design their mission program. Garrett had received a large Luce grant that allowed them to explore this field and hire a professor. For years Garrett had maintained a professor of mission, however the position was not filled after the last occupant, Walter Cason, who was my professor and retired in 1994. Given the considerable 15 year vacancy, the task force was given the responsibility of studying the field and competing institutions and recommending to the president the title and direction of the new position.⁶ After a year of study, the task force came to the conclusion that language of “Christian Mission” was passé and terms such as global or world Christianity were more appropriate for the position and the discipline. The Luce grant allowed Garrett to hire a professor, Henk Pieterse, who joined the faculty full-time in 2010 and has been promoted to Associate Professor.

Also in 2009 Pfeiffer hired a new provost and began preparing for its SACS 10-year reaccreditation visit. The provost called for all the majors to have a program review to see how many students had graduated and what were the costs involved. Our religion department had multiple overlapping majors of youth ministry, Christian education and missions—along with a religion major for preseminary students. The mission major had been in existence for 5 years and was only graduating one, two or three students a year but was trending upward. Under pressure from the provost our department streamlined the major into a more general Bible and Intercultural Studies major with two internal tracks for age appropriate ministries or intercultural studies. The intent from an administrative perspective was to lessen the number of course offerings and thus the cost per student by also utilizing course offerings in other fields such as sociology and communications. However this was also another domino in the movement from the sacred to the secular and the biblical to the scientific.

Now this is only anecdotal evidence and I admit not conducting a general survey across the discipline with representative institutions. In fact, there are many schools that retain the traditional nomenclature. Even if I had been able to conduct a broad survey, there would still be other variables such as the complexity of namechange among the stakeholders, such as faculty, administrators, trustees, donors, current and former students. Moreover, when a chair has been endowed then the name is restricted by the intent of the donors, as is the case of my current position.

Presently I am professor of Evangelism, Mission and Methodist Studies at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, which is an endowed position. It would be very difficult to alter the position title because there is a binding memorandum of understanding that was signed by the advancement office. I suspect that many

6 Garrett-Evangelical’s decision to apply for this grant and reinstate the position was due, in part, to the urging of the Dana Robert and United Methodist Professors of Mission, whom wrote a prophetic call in the early 2000s to the denominational seminaries to reverse the trend and fill the vacant mission positions.

schools with an endowed position in mission would have great difficulty changing the name, in spite of the trend toward terms like world or global Christianity. Perhaps there are some development officers here who can clarify this.

In the first section, I have outlined three shifts in our field in the last few years: 1) the trend to change school or program names away from Christian Mission, 2) the decision of the AAR to split from the SBL reflecting the name change of religion departments to religious studies, and 3) the movement in college, universities, and seminaries from teaching Christian Mission to Global or World Christianity.

Panama Congress of 1916: from Christian Mission to World Christianity

Now I will move to the body of my presentation, which is a reflection on the 1916 Panama Congress as a case study of mission on this, its centenary. I lift up this congress, and the early 20th century conciliar mission efforts in Latin America, as an example of the transition from teaching Christian Mission to World Christianity. Being well-documented with three volumes of proceedings, the congress is an excellent time-capsule to compare the nature of Christian Mission then and now. I will make three principal observations in the difference of Christian Mission in 2016. The first observation is the changes in the ecumenical spirit, the second is the agency of autonomous church leadership in the global south, and the third is greater dependence on the Holy Spirit between then and now.

Regarding ecumenical relations, the 1916 Panama Congress had 481 attendees including 299 church workers (230 of whom were official delegates) from 22 nations representing 50 ecclesial bodies and mission organizations.⁷ It was the first conference of its kind in Latin America. The conciliar movement had been building since William Carey's 1792 "Inquiry" and the call for unity intensified with the 1854 Union Missionary Conference in New York and ensuing conferences.⁸ The idea for a meeting about Latin American work was ironically birthed at the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh even though the region was excluded as a mission field. The purpose of Edinburgh was "to consider missionary problems in relation to the non-Christian world" and therefore, as a predominantly

7 Homer Stuntz, *South American Neighbors*, Methodist Book Concern, New York, 1916, 173.

8 Norman E. Thomas, *Mission and Unity: Lessons from History, 1792-2010*, Cascade Books, New York, 2010, 31.

Roman Catholic region, the international committee considered Latin America to already be Christian.⁹ Presbyterian mission executive Robert Speer challenged this decision and the criteria for additional mission work:

The first test of religious conditions is to be found in the facts of social life. No land can be conceded to have a satisfactory religion where the moral conditions are as they have been shown to be in South America. If it can be proved that the conditions of any European or North American land are as they are in South America, then it will be proved also that that land needs a religious reformation.¹⁰

Rather than precluding the need for Protestant missions based on religious affiliation, Speer assessed the need based on moral conditions. His rationale for doing missionary work in South America is not based on denominational affiliation, rather on quality of life. Writing his book *South American Problems* in 1913 after Edinburgh to advocate for Protestant mission work in the region, Speer is making two important contributions to missiology. On one hand he is challenging the understanding of Christendom--the idea that a geographical place can be Christian. This is an important challenge, which is revolutionary for its time, or to use the words of David Bosch “a paradigm shift,” which challenged the basis on which whole continents were included or not in the Edinburgh conference. The second major contribution that Speer is making is the connection between Christianity and a just society. This is a precursor to Latin American liberation theology that some 60 years later would introduce the concept of social sin. This concept articulated by Gustavo Gutierrez and others argued that private sins that violate personal piety such as drinking, smoking or using foul language are relatively minor sins compared to participating in systematic evil and economic systems that impoverish people and deny them basic human living conditions such as food, potable water, employment and shelter. This understanding of systemic injustice moves beyond petty concepts of church membership or religious affiliation to a deeper understanding of justice as a criteria for mission work. For Speer, what matters most is not whether a society or people are called Roman Catholic or Protestant. What matters is whether the society is organized according to Christian understandings of social justice. This is a profound ecumenical spirit to which many of us can still aspire.

Mexican layperson Gonzalo Baez Camargo not only disagreed with Edinburgh’s decision to exclude Latin America, he challenged Edinburgh’s bifurcation of the world between “civilized” Christian countries that “sent” missionaries and “uncivilized” non-Christian countries of Africa, Asia and the Pacific

9 Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, “Christian Work in Latin America,” 1917.

10 Robert E. Speer, *South American Problems*, Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (New York: Lanham, 1913), 145.

rim that “received” missionaries. Of course he took exception to placing Latin America in the former category.¹¹

In spite of being excluded from Edinburgh the pre-reports from mission work in Latin America were included in the proceedings, especially in Commission I: “Carrying the Gospel to all the non-Christian World.”¹² While in Edinburgh a group of delegates who disagreed with Latin America’s exclusion gathered for an informal lunch. They decided to hold a follow-up meeting and invite some leading mission executives.¹³ At the conclusion of the second meeting they issued the following statement:

The undersigned delegates to the World Missionary Conference, rejoicing over the success of that great gathering and the impulse it must give to the evangelization of the non-Christian world, feel constrained to say a word for those missions in countries nominally Christian that were not embraced in the scope of the Edinburgh Conference, we do not stop to inquire whether the dominant Churches in these lands are or are not Christian Churches, or whether they are or are not faithful to their duty; we only affirm that millions and millions of people are practically without the Word of God and do not really know what the Gospel is.

This group commended the systematic approach of the World Missionary Conference and wanted the same attention for Latin America. This statement is careful to avoid falling into the Roman Catholic-Protestant polemic and rather places the emphasis on sharing the Gospel to the unreached. Before departing Edinburgh the Foreign Missions Conference of North America appointed a committee to make plans for a congress with Robert Speer as the chair, known as the committee of five.

Formation of the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America

These plans came to fruition with an ensuing meeting in New York City on March 12-13, 1913 that was attended by executives of 30 different mission organizations and missionaries home on furlough. The conference picked right up

¹¹ Gonzalo Baez Camargo, “Mexico: a Long Stretch from Edinburgh,” *Ecumenical Review*, vol. XVI, Oct. 1963-July 1964, 267.

¹² Missionary Research Library Archives: Section 12, World Missionary Conference Records, Edinburgh, 1910.

¹³ Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, “Christian Work in Latin America,” 1917.

where Edinburgh left off in the theme of Christian unity and a country-by-country analysis of mission work. Representatives gave a total of 15 reports on topics such as: “The Present Extent and Condition of Mission Work in Latin American Lands,” “Unoccupied Fields and the Unreached Populations in Latin America,” “The Bible in Latin America,” and “Religious Liberty and the Problem of Church and State in Latin America” to name a few. In these reports contained the most recent statistical data on the status of mission efforts in Latin America.

Near the end of the 2-day meeting, Rev. Ed Cook D.D. gave his report about the conciliar work in Mexico. By this time the revolution had broken out in Mexico, and as a result, Cook advocated seizing this opportunity to implement unification of Protestant mission efforts:

In Mexico there is a situation demanding our immediate study and our closest and most careful cooperation in the handling. The problems involved in this situation relate first to Christian education; second to Christian literature; third, to self-support on the part of the native congregations.¹⁴

Regarding his third and final point about autonomy, Cook concluded:

In the matter of ‘self-support’ the cause of Protestantism in Mexico has suffered most on account of the lack of cooperation between the denominations. After sixty years of Christian work in Mexico we are almost as far from the establishment of the native church as we were at the end of the first ten or fifteen years of continuous effort.¹⁵

Yet Cook’s report did not seem to comprehend a social analysis of what was happening in the larger Mexican society as an extension of Protestant mission work. His report looked very narrowly at church institutions and instead referred to the instability in Mexico as the ideal time to carry out sweeping changes. Since Cook’s presentation came near the end of the conference, there was little time for discussion or questions. The final task of the 1913 meeting was creating the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America (CCLA), known as the committee of 18, to continue the work.

The first meeting of the newly formed CCLA was convened in Garden City, Long Island in January 1914 with the task of planning the Panama Congress, however the news from Mexico grabbed everyone’s attention. The words of Ed Cook’s report on Mexico the previous year were still relevant: “We have talked much in recent years about fraternity, comity, cooperation, and union.” The CCLA

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

considered the chaos in Mexico to be an opportunity to realign the overlapping of territories and increase cooperation in educational work and publishing. So the CCLA concluded their meet in Long Island then called for a meeting in Cincinnati on June 30-July 1, 1914 and invited representatives from mission agencies and missionaries working in Mexico, many of whom were back in the U.S. for their own safety.¹⁶

U.S.-Mexico Diplomatic Relations

In the interim between the meeting in January in Long Island and the meeting in Cincinnati, U.S.-Mexican diplomatic relations took a turn for the worst. In the spring of the same year some U.S. sailors were arrested for entering a fuel loading station in Tampico and President Woodrow Wilson commanded the U.S. Navy to invade and occupy the Port of Veracruz on April 9, 1914. In the years leading up to the revolution, the U.S. enjoyed great influence in the government of Porfirio Diaz, president from 1876 to 1880 and 1884 until he was overthrown in 1911. This was a period of growing U.S. investments when Jay Gould built the Mexican Southern Railroad, J.P. Morgan established banks and Rockefeller's Standard Oil began acquiring sub-soil mineral rights and extracting oil.¹⁷ When the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America met in Panama in 1916, reports on Mexico's economy estimated the U.S. total investment at \$1 billion, which was 51% of Mexico's commerce.¹⁸

So when the sixty representatives from eleven different mission agencies gathered on June 30, 1914 in Cincinnati, U.S.-Mexican diplomatic relations were tense. Given the situation in Mexico, it would have been difficult to hold the meeting there—even if this were a consideration, nor were Mexicans able to travel had they been invited.

The Cincinnati Plan

While the CCLA meeting earlier in 1914 received general reports about the Protestant work throughout Latin America, the meeting in Cincinnati was completed focused on Mexico. There had been a lot of talk about Christian unity coming out of Edinburgh, but the unique situation in Mexico made it a pressing

16 Christian Work in Latin America, Reports of Commissions I, II, & III, February 2016, The Missionary Education Movement, New York, 1917.

https://archive.org/stream/christianworkinl01cong/christianworkinl01cong_djvu.txt

17 John Ross, *The Annexation of Mexico*, Common Courage Press, 1998, 53.

18 Missionary Education Movement, Committee on Co-operation on Latin America, New York, 1917, vol.1, 57.

matter. Cincinnati was the first meeting to actually implement the sweeping changes and unification recommended at Edinburgh. Cook's report and specific recommendations at the CCLA's founding meeting in 1913 were the impetus for the Cincinnati Plan. Namely, he called for cooperation in three areas: Christian education, publications and decrease competition among mission agencies in order to increase self-support for native congregations. Present in Cincinnati were representatives from the Congregationalists, United Presbyterian Church (UPCUSA), Disciples of Christ, Methodist Episcopal Church, Disciples of Christ, Episcopalians, Friends, and Northern Baptists, the YMCA, among other denominations and organizations.

The ultimate goal of the meeting in Cincinnati was to unify all the Protestant mission efforts under one umbrella that would be called "The Evangelical Church of Mexico."¹⁹ In order to accomplish this larger goal, the plan called for much smaller and more concrete steps. The Cincinnati Plan called upon the denominations to consolidate their evangelization efforts across Mexico to avoid competition and enhance efficiency.

When news of the Cincinnati Plan reached the leadership of the Mexican churches, the response was less than positive. Pastors and leaders had given their lives to certainly ministries and certain regions of the country, and did not want to leave them.²⁰ When missionaries met with leaders of the Presbyterian mission in the spring of 1919 to implement the plan, Mexican leaders demonstrated their clear differences. Leandro Garza Mora articulated this frustration when he stood up and exclaimed: "The Plan of Cincinnati [which is what the Mexican churches called the outcome of the Cincinnati Conference--sic] is nothing other than the plan to assassinate the Presbyterian Church in Mexico."²¹ The word for assassinate in Spanish is "*asesinato*," so the Plan of Cincinnati was dubbed "*el Plan de Asesinato*."

Historian Daniel J. Young, wrote in regarding the Cincinnati Plan: "The specific actions on the part of the foreign mission boards working in Mexico caused hurt among Mexican church members and in many cases strained the relationship between Mexican and American Protestants in an already charged atmosphere, heightened by American interventions in Mexico during the Mexican Revolution."²² In many ways the expedited Cincinnati Plan was unfortunate, however the preparations for the Panama Congress were much more intentional

19 Daniel J. Young, "The Cincinnati Plan and the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico: A Brief Study of Relations Between American Mission Boards and Mexican Protestant Churches During the Mexican Revolution," Master's Thesis. UTEP, 2006, 33.

20 Young, 33.

21 Quote from Charles Petran, "Cincinnati Plan," unpublished paper, p. 9. Cited in Young, 33.

22 Daniel J. Young, 33.

and sensitive to local concerns. The U.S. government called upon “ABC Diplomacy” (Argentina, Brazil and Chile) to resolve the immediate stand-off with Mexico, although the Revolution and U.S. intervention was not over with.²³

1916 Panama Congress

The Panama Congress was held February 10-20, 1916 in the canal zone in Panama City, the same city that hosted the 1826 meeting of newly independent Latin American nations. The CCLA had ruled out hosting the congress in the US “because it was a gathering for Latin America,”²⁴ as well as Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires and settled on Panama. Another attraction was the newly opened Panama Canal inaugurated just two years prior. John R. Mott, chairman of Edinburgh conference responded to the welcome from Panamanian Minister of Foreign Affairs of Jose E. Lefevre: “We have delegates from virtually every one of the republics of North and South America. We likewise have representatives from Europe and the distant parts of the world.”²⁵ Mott continued in his usual grandiose and optimistic tone in spite of the ongoing Mexican Revolution and the start of World War I in Europe, “I fancy that not in the history of the Western Hemisphere has there been assembled a gathering so representative of the leaders and the forces of righteousness of this great sphere of the world’s activity.”²⁶

The congress was an accomplishment, a challenge and a step toward ecumenism. An accomplishment because 145 Latin American representatives, in addition to 159 supporters from the U.S., Canada, Great Britain and Italy attended the Congress and offered details reports on the state of missions and lively discussions about how to best support work in the region. The congress had 22 different denominations and mission societies represented who earnestly attempted to harness the spirit of Edinburgh to reduce competition and duplication, while increasing cooperation.²⁷

It was a challenge because this was the first such conciliar Protestant gathering in a region generally recognized to be predominantly Roman Catholic. In fact, some evangelicals objected to the idea of the congress fearing compromise and cooperation with the Catholic Church. They were afraid of any movement toward

23 Although later in 1916 after the congress the U.S. invaded Mexican territory with an incursion from the north to chase Poncho Villa. For more see Joseph Smith, *The United States and Latin America: A History of American Diplomacy 1776-2000*, Routledge, 2005, 77.

24 Harlan P. Beach, *Renaissant Latin America: An Outline and Interpretation of the Congress on Christian Work in Latin America*, held at Panama, February 10-19, 1916, Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, New York, 1916, 2.

25 *Ibid*, 1.

26 As chairman of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 John Mott set a very optimistic tone based on his book entitled *Evangelization of the World in this Generation, Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions*, New York, 1900.

27 Stuntz, 173.

reconciliation with Rome.²⁸ At the other end of the Protestant camp were those who objected to the meeting out of respect for the Roman Catholic Church. The Episcopal Church was particularly conflicted because they saw themselves between Catholics and Protestants and longed for the eventual unity of the whole church. The Church of England was one of the primary opponents of including Latin America at Edinburgh, and didn't even want to reports to appear in the proceedings. The Mission Board of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S. initially voted not to participate in the Panama Congress but then in May of 1915 decided to allow delegates to attend "provided that whatever invitation is given to every Christian body shall be sent to every Christian church having work in Latin America."²⁹ The Episcopalians already had work in Mexico and Brazil. At the October meeting of the Mission Board a vote was taken to repeal the decision to send delegates but failed by a 26-13 margin. This action was protested by some board members fearing it moved the church closer to Protestantism and after the vote, five members, included two bishops, resigned their position on the board. Resolutions were subsequently adopted stating that the congress is not about legislation, rather "to recognize all the elements of truth and goodness in any form of religious faith, that its approach to the people will be neither critical nor antagonistic, and that all communions and organizations which accept Jesus Christ as divine Saviour and Lord and the Holy Scriptures ... are invited to the Congress."³⁰ The Roman Catholic Bishop of Panama was vehemently opposed to the congress and warned his constituents to be aware of false prophets and "wolves in their interior."³¹ In spite of this warning five Catholic bishops attended and according to Harlan Beach's interpretation of the proceedings "were most helpful participants in its deliberations."³²

It was a step toward ecumenism because the congress was successful at its main purpose of collaboration between Protestant mission work in Latin America. As a result of the meeting the denominations standardized educational requirements at training institutions within countries and through these efforts eventually joint conciliar seminaries were established in Buenos Aires, Santiago, Rio de Janeiro, San Jose, Costa Rica and Mexico City to train future church leaders.³³ Ecumenical publishing houses and Bible societies were established to produce Christian literature. Comity agreements were signed marking the territories where denominations would focus their efforts, so as to not compete or duplicate efforts. This specifically meant that mission agencies agreed to not start work in towns where another Protestant denomination was already working. They even focused

28 Beach, 10.

29 *The American Year Book: A Record of Events and Progress*, T. Nelson & Sons, Vol.6, 715.

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*

32 *Ibid.*, 11.

33 Homer Stuntz, *South American Neighbors*, The Methodist Book Concern, New York, 1916, 189-90.

on areas where the Catholic church was not present, such as rural areas and among indigenous populations. This was already underway in Mexico after the Cincinnati Plan and was expanded to other countries as well. Immediately following the Panama Congress six follow-up meetings to disburse and implement plans were conducted in Lima, Santiago, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Havana, and San Juan, Puerto Rico and Barranquilla, Colombia. By 1930 the CCLA reported 28 cooperative enterprises in Latin America and donors were more willing to give to these efforts than denominational projects.³⁴

The congress also acknowledged that many of the Protestant mission efforts had been among the “humbler” classes and therefore it was proposed to “begin a ‘drive’ to reach the ‘intellectuals’—the influential classes.”³⁵ This was a two-step strategy to reach out to current students and to provide better education and training for candidates for ministry. Bishop William C. Brown of the Protestant Episcopal Church, who agreed to come on his own accord and not as a spokesperson for his denomination, stated: “I believe most fully in the educated native minister. I am convinced that the Anglo-Saxon cannot within one generation fully understand the of the Latin man [and woman].”³⁶ The congress was conducted primarily in English with some speeches by Spanish and Portuguese delegates. Another fact about the congress is that all the meetings were conducted in English, limiting the local participation, although the proceedings were published in Spanish, Portuguese, in addition to English.³⁷ Subsequently congresses in Montevideo (1925) and Havana (1929) had increasing percentages of Latin American delegates and more contextualization of the themes generated by regional and local concerns.³⁸

With successive meeting there was a growing sense of nationalistic pride and ownership that Latin American leaders were feeling. By reading the proceedings from Panama, Montevideo and Havana, one can notice the growth and expansion of topics becoming more and more contextualized. The 1929 Havana meeting was planned, organized and run by Latinos with an agenda shaped predominantly by the Latin American context. Mature Latin American leaders such as Gonzalo Baez Camargo and Alberto Rembao were instrumental in the Latinization of the conference.³⁹ For example the issue of ministry among indigenous peoples was barely mentioned at the Panama Congress, however by the Havana meeting in 1929 this was explicit. The topic of women was discussed in Panama, but by the Havana meeting there was deeper reflection on the role of the Latin American

34 “Annual Report of the Committee on Cooperation on Latin America,” New York, 1930, p.10.

35 Stuntz, 193-4.

36 *Ibid*, 196.

37 Jean-Pierre Bastian, *Breve Historia de Protestantismo en America Latina*, CUPSA, Mexico, 157-163.

38 *Ibid*, 163-165.

39 Alberto Rembao, <http://www.bu.edu/missiology/missionary-biography/r-s/rembao-alberto-1895-1962/> (accessed June 13, 2016)

woman in conciliar Protestant ministry.⁴⁰ The contextualization of the themes reflected the emergence of stronger Latin American leadership, but efforts for Latin Americans to gain more authority within Protestant institutions was slow and gradual. The Havana Congress saw the birth of the idea for the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Latin America and appointed a committee that met in August of the following year in San Juan, Puerto Rico. This committee was the forerunner of the *Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias* (CLAI).⁴¹ At the closing of the Havana Congress on June 30th, no one could have predicted the major economic challenges caused by the crash of the stock market later that fall that would make fundraising more difficult and hamper mission support.⁴²

Another of the factors in the transition from teaching Christian mission to global Christianity is precisely the rise of autonomous local leadership. There was a growing anti-American sentiment in Latin America, generally speaking, as a reaction against U.S. imperialism. Meanwhile the 1823 Monroe Doctrine was a more passive document asking European nations not to increase their involvement or recolonize Latin America, President Teddy Roosevelt's "Big Stick" policy was more pro-active. Following the invasion of the "rough riders" in Cuba's war of Independence in 1898, known in our history books as the "Spanish American War," President Roosevelt announced in December of 1904 that the U.S. could intervene in Western hemispheric nations to assure that they upheld their obligations to international creditors and avoided "foreign aggression to the detriment of the entire body of American nations."⁴³ This came to be known as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. As a result, the U.S. conducted 32 military missions in Latin America between the Spanish American War and the Great Depression in countries such as Cuba, Panama, Mexico and Nicaragua. These interventions fomented an anti-American backlash that negatively impacted missionary effectiveness in the region. Responding to U.S. military interventions in Nicaragua, American missionary E.M. Haymaker wrote:

Our Secretary of State in order to protect the interests of a few Americans of doubtful character and to win some advantages without greater sacrifice, dispatched some marine infantries in Nicaragua and provoked the rage of

40 Guy Inman, *Evangelicals at Havana: being an account of the Hispanic American Evangelical Congress, at Havana, Cuba, June 20-30, 1929*, Committee on Cooperation in Latin America, New York, 1929. Also see Gonzalo Baez Camargo, *Hacia la renovación religiosa en Hispano-América. Resumen e interpretación del Congreso Evangélico Hispano-Americano de la Habana*, CUPSA, Mexico City, 1930.

41 *Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias* (CLAI) began with an idea from a meeting in Oaxtepec, Mexico in 1978 and was formally organized in Huampaní, Lima, Peru in 1982. Currently there are 55 denominations from the Latin America and the Caribbean who belong to CLAI. <http://www.claiweb.org/index.php/el-clai/que-es-el-clai-2> (accessed June 11, 2016)

42 "Annual Report of the Committee on Cooperation on Latin America," New York, 1930, p.8.

43 "Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine," <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/roosevelt-and-monroe-doctrine> (accessed June 11, 2016)

Latin Americans from Aunt Juana to Ushia, and also provoked the rage of all the Americans who are not friends of imperialism and bullying. All the other interests, of whatever nature, have to suffer the consequences of this monumental mistake...The anti-American sentiment has been intense. Publications and demonstrations have been multiple and viral.⁴⁴

It is very telling that the 1930 Annual Report of the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America began with these words:

Any treatment of Latin America for the year 1930, from whatever standpoint, seemingly must begin with reference to the widely scattered revolutionary movements which are having a profound effect on spiritual as well as material conditions. Not since 1810, when a general movement throughout Latin America was begun to free the colonies from Spain, have our neighbors to the South been so universally convulsed by political agitation as they are today.⁴⁵

Also, in 1930 the Methodist Churches in Mexico and Brazil gained their autonomy from the Methodist Episcopal Church in the U.S. The Methodist Church in Brazil wanted to elect their own bishops and the church in Mexico needed to become autonomous to function under the 1917 constitution that emerged from the Mexican revolution preventing the intervention of foreign-born clergy.⁴⁶ The National Presbyterian Church of Mexico organized its first general assembly in 1947. Mexico had an anti-American sentiment after U.S. interventions during the revolution and the church also felt it as a result of the Cincinnati Plan. So a transition to national leadership was a natural occurrence.

Eugene Nida outlined four categories of Latin American churches in his anthropological assessment from 1961: 1) mission-directed churches that are run by expatriates and foreign mission agencies, 2) “national-front” churches that have figureheads of national leaders, but are really directed from abroad, 3) indigenized churches that have broken away from the “mother” churches abroad and are now under national leadership, and 4) fully indigenous churches that have developed

44 M.E. Haymaker “Ecos de Kellogg,” *The Evangelist*, VI:6, 1927, p. 14. Cited in Juan Stam, “La Misión Latinoamericana y el Imperialismo Norteamericano, 1926-1928,” published in *Contribuciones para una Historia del Protestantismo en America Latina*, “Taller de Teología, no.9, año 1981. (my translation).

45 “Annual Report of the Committee on Cooperation on Latin America,” New York, 1930, p. 1.

46 Katherine Ryan-McIlhon, *Los Artículos Anticlericales en la Constitución Federal de 1917 y sus Consecuencias Históricas en Mexico*, *Ave Maria International Law Journal*, Vol. 1:2, 2012, 489-90.

under Latin American leadership and are self-funded.⁴⁷ So far this paper has focused on categories one and two, but now I will turn to models three and four as representatives of the transition from teaching mission to teaching global Christianity. Examples of the third and fourth categories emerged with the arrival of Pentecostalism in Latin America in the early 20th century.

Arrival of Pentecostalism in the Latin America

The Azusa Street revival occurred on April 14, 1906 on Azusa Street in Los Angeles when Seymour and seven others fell to the floor in a religious ecstasy, speaking in tongues.⁴⁸ There were blacks, whites, Mexicans, Italians, Chinese, Russians, and Indians involved early in the revival, which was unusual for a segregated American society. People came from all around the world to see and experience the revival. By November of the same year “Spirit filled” workers went out to nine different American cities and also left for India, China, Europe, Palestine and Africa.⁴⁹ It arrived in Latin America after Methodist woman missionary and early Pentecostal missiologist, Minnie Abrams, mailed a copy of her book, *The Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Fire*, from India to friend and former classmate at the, Chicago Training School for deaconesses, May Hilton.⁵⁰ Hilton was one of the first two graduates of the school and subsequently married Dr. Willis Hoover and became a William Taylor self-supporting missionary in Chile.⁵¹ Having a copy of Abrams book, Hoover sought and experienced baptism of the Holy Spirit in Valparaiso, Chile in 1909 and began a movement within the Methodist Episcopal Church before being expelled to the start of the Methodist Pentecostal Church of Chile.⁵²

47 Eugene Nida, “The Indigenous Churches in Latin America,” *Practical Anthropology*, 8:3, 1961, 97.

48 Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition in the United States* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 96.

49 Allan H. Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2007), 51.

50 Minnie Abrams, *The Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Fire*, 2nd edition, Muhkti Mission Press, Kedgaon, 1906, 67.

51 Dana Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of their Thought and Practice*, Mercer University Press, 1997, 247.

52 Philip Wingeier-Rayo, “Hoover C. Willis,” in Charles Yrigoyen and Susan Warrick, eds., *Historical Dictionary of Methodism*, 3rd ed. (Scranton: Historical Dictionary of Methodism, 2013), 191-92.

Italian Waldensian Luigi Francescon received the gift of the Spirit in Chicago in 1907 and then had a vision to go to Argentina and Brazil in 1910 to share his faith.⁵³ Pentecostalism reached Mexico when a couple from Villa Aldama, Chihuahua went to Los Angeles during the Mexican Revolution began attending a Pentecostal church where they experienced revival, were converted and baptized. After a couple years, they were well-established in the Pentecostal congregation when the wife, Romana de Valenzuela, began to miss her family and was concerned about their spiritual well-being. In the fall of 1914 she returned home to Villa Aldama to convert them to her new faith.⁵⁴ On November 1, 1914 Romana was leading a time of prayer with 12 people when they received a baptism of the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. Romana's vision had been fulfilled and Pentecostalism had arrived in Mexico under the name of *Iglesia Apostolica*.⁵⁵

José Miguez Bonino reflects on the arrival, growth and varieties of Latin American Protestantism in his classic book, *Faces of Latin American Protestantism*. On the arrival of Pentecostalism, Miguez Bonino writes:

The seed could have started in Los Angeles or Chicago, but it was planted in Latin American soil and was nourished with the vital juices of this land and new Latin American grassroots masses have proven that the flavor of the fruits corresponds to the demands of their pallet.⁵⁶

Míguez Bonino goes on to recognize that Pentecostalism represented both a challenge and a temptation for Protestants, which generated conflicts and some divisions among Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian and Disciples of Christ congregations.⁵⁷ Walter Hollenweger, Cecilia Mariz, and David Martin, among others, analyze the emergence of Pentecostalism from a sociological perspective and interpret it as a coping mechanism easing and preparing people for the transition from a primarily agrarian to an industrialized society.⁵⁸ In the process, many more national churches were formed representative of Eugene Nida's fourth category of indigenous churches.

53 José Miguez-Bonino, *Rostros del Protestantismo Latinoamericano*, ISEDET, Buenos Aires, 1995, 59.

54 Kenneth D. Gill, *Toward a Contextualized Theology for the Third World: The Emergence and Development of Jesus Name Pentecostalism in Mexico* (Frankfort and Berlin: Peter Lang, 1994), 43.

55 Philip Wingeier-Rayo, "A Third Phase of Christianity: A Reflection on One Hundred Years of Pentecostalism in Mexico," in Amos Yong, Vinson Synan and Miguel Alvarez, (eds.) *Global Renewal Christianity: Latin America Spirit Empowered Movements: Past, Present, and Future*, Charisma House: Lake Mary, FL 2016.

56 José Miguez-Bonino, *Rostros del Protestantismo Latinoamericano*, ISEDET, Buenos Aires, 1995, 60. (my translation)

57 *Ibid.*

58 See the discussion on Pentecostalism in Latin America in Edward Cleary and Hannah Stewart-Gambino, *Power, Politics and Pentecostals in Latin America*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1998. Also see Philip Wingeier-Rayo, *Where are the Poor?*, Wipf and Stock, 2011, 32-3.

Clayton Berg and Paul Pretiz highlighted a growing phenomenon in the region with their article: “Latin America’s Fifth Wave of Protestantism.” The authors rightly argue that has been much written about (AICs) African Independence Churches or African Indigenous Churches, but not so much about autochthonous churches in Latin America. The authors define autochthonous as churches that:

- (1) have developed spontaneously, without a history of missionary involvement;
- or (2) were planted by missionary efforts of other Latin American autochthonous churches; or (3) were formerly mission related but have broken foreign links and reflect the people’s culture in the deepest sense.⁵⁹

While doing research a few years back in Mexico I visited the annual convention of *La Iglesia Cristiana Apostolica Pentecostes* (ICAP) at their headquarters in the small rural town Zacapalco, Morelos—about two hours south of Mexico City. The gathering met under a large circus tent and was attended by over a thousand people lasting for three days. This autonomous denomination began in 1986 as a legally registered entity with the Mexican government under the leadership of General Apostle Crescenciano Roa Bueno. The ministry quickly spread to 17 small towns in the State of Morelos, then expanded to six other Mexican states, and more recently has sent missionaries to the United States.⁶⁰ This is just one example of a growing sector of indigenous Christianity that David Barrett’s *World Christian Encyclopedia* calculated to be 40.6% of all *evangélicos* in Mexico.⁶¹

Conclusion

So this brings us back full circle to our reflection on teaching Christian mission in an age of world Christianity. Here I would like to highlight certain observations that have emerged from our review of the 1916 Panama Congress and early 20th century mission work in Latin America. The congress reported a Latin American population of 18 million in 1916 and predicted that it would grow to 250 million by the year 2000.⁶² Currently the population of Latin America and the Caribbean is more than double that figure at 530 million according to the World Bank.⁶³ In 1916 the U.S. had about 33% more inhabitants than Latin America and today this trend has reversed. According to a 2014 Pew Research Center poll sixty-nine percent of Latin Americans consider themselves Roman Catholic and 19% *Evangélico*.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Clayton Berg and Paul Pretiz, *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, October 1996, 157.

⁶⁰ *La Iglesia Cristiana Apostolica Internacional* (ICAP) <http://www.icap-ar.org/quienessomos/> (accessed June 13, 2016)

⁶¹ David B. Barrett, ed., *World Christian Encyclopedia*, Oxford University Press, 1982.

⁶² Beach, 27.

⁶³ The World Bank, 2015. <http://data.worldbank.org/region/LAC> (accessed June 1, 2016)

⁶⁴ Pew Research Center, “Religion in Latin America,” November 11, 2014 <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/11/13/religion-in-latin-america/> (accessed May 31, 2016)

The 160,000 Protestants in 1916 have grown to around 60 million in 2015, and most of this growth has been unplanned or uncoordinated by mission agencies or congresses.⁶⁵ The denominations represented at the Panama Congress are relatively small minorities and 65% of Latin American *evangélicos* identify as Pentecostal.⁶⁶ So if we were to measure the growth of those historical denominations present at the 1916 congress as our measure for success, then we would have to state that the efforts of the CCLA were a failure. It is, indeed, the growth of the indigenous churches that provoked David Stoll to ask the question: *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?*⁶⁷ However Pope Francis, the first Latin American Pope, has re-energized the Catholic faithful as evidenced through the response to his recent visits to Brazil, Cuba and Mexico.

In spite of Andrew Walls prediction that the greatest issues facing the body of Christ in the 21st century will be ecumenical issues,⁶⁸ we have seen a movement away from organized mission congresses, such as Edinburgh, Panama, Montevideo and Havana with their reports, maps, well-planned centrifugal missionary initiative from the center to the margins and sometimes from the North to South. And replacing them have been a trend toward an indigenous, polycentric, empowered indigenous and nationalistic Christianity that starts locally and moves from South to South, and sometimes South to North that marks the transition from teaching of Christian Mission to Global Christianity. In my research I have seen the emergence of indigenous leadership that has inculturated the gospel according to local context, language and culture.

Regarding ecumenism, the controlled spirit of organizing conferences and intentional dialogues between mission agencies has waned and splintered, a new ecumenical spirit of partnerships and impromptu relationships has emerged. *Evangélicos* reluctantly acknowledge that in spite of Catholic-Protestant tensions, most converts come from a deep faith learned in the Roman Catholic Church. Recent studies of Pentecostalism have acknowledged that the two traditions have more in common than originally thought.⁶⁹ Todd Hartch in his book, *The Rebirth of Christianity*, calls for better ecumenical relations in the future of Latin American Christianity where Pentecostalism and Catholicism mutually enhance one another.⁷⁰ Moreover, the Roman Catholic Church has been strengthened by

65 Samuel Escobar, "It's Your Turn, Young Ones—Make Me Proud! Evangelical Mission in Latin America and Beyond," chapter in *Latin American Mission: Mission Theology for the 21st Century*, Miguel Alvarez, ed., Regnum Books, Oxford, 2016.

66 Pew, "Religion in Latin America," 2014.

67 David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth*, University of California Press, 1990.

68 Andrew F. Walls, "From Christendom to World Christianity," in *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Orbis, 2002), 69.

69 Yong, Synan and Alvarez, 15.

70 Todd Hartch, *The Rebirth of Latin American Christianity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014.

the presence of *Evangélicos*, whose emphasis on the Word of God, passion for evangelism, and music have challenged the Catholic Church. At the same time, *Evangélicos* have learned from the institutional strength, unity, academic rigor and long-standing traditions of Roman Catholics. Finally on the topic of ecumenism, I believe that Robert Speer had a point when the criteria for mission is not whether another religious group is already there, rather on the ethical conditions present. You and I might disagree about doctrines, but no one cannot argue against clean drinking water, food and security for marginalized communities.

Lastly, I also see greater dependence on the Holy Spirit practiced in Latin American Christianity, a trend well documented by Philip Jenkins and Harvey Cox, among others.⁷¹ Gone are the scientific studies and heavy-handed directives from mission agencies. In their place, indigenous leadership has emerged that relies on discernment of the Holy Spirit and empowerment to be nimble within a complex and changing cultural context.

In closing, I would like to share that teaching Christian Mission can no longer be a top-down, “how to” tool box for future practitioners. It needs to be more about cultural sensitivity and listening to emerging and marginal voices. Teaching Christian Mission in an Age of Global Christianity is more about spiritual discernment of where God is already at work, what God is already doing and how we can humbly participate. Perhaps in this age of World Christianity Bishop William C. Brown was right when he stated a hundred years ago in Panama: “I believe most fully in the educated native minister. I am convinced that the Anglo-Saxon cannot within one generation fully understand the view-point of the Latin man [and woman].”⁷²

71 See Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, University of Oxford Press, 2002. Also see, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the GlobalSouth*, Oxford University Press, 2006. Also see Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the 21st Century*, Addison-Wesley, Reading, PA, 1995.

72 Stuntz, 196.