THE LATIN AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION TO METHODISM

by Gonzalo Baez-Camargo

When I first read the subject for this lecture, I thought there might be a typist's error in its wording. For according to tradition one would rather expect something like "The Methodist Contribution to Latin America," or more particularly, "The Contribution of American Methodism to Latin America." And indeed both of these would be very proper subjects, on which there is plenty to say and to be grateful for. However, that the wording be precisely such is clearly indicative of the new day in Christian missions the world over.

The old division of the missionary map in "sending" and "receiving" countries is over, although it represents a valid conception at the primitive stage of every missionary undertaking. But we now are painfully conscious of the fact that in so called "Christian" countries there are large sociological areas which must be considered as "mission fields." The entire world, after all, including the formerly called "sending countries," is mission field.

Latin American Methodism is now over a hundred years old. It is therefore very proper to consider what may have been and what may still in the future be its contribution to Methodism. But first, it is perhaps in order to take a bird's eye view of the history of Methodism in Latin America.

*****

The first Protestants ever to set foot on Latin American soil were French, English and German pirates who professed some type of the reformed religion and were part of the crews sailing the high seas on the hunt of Spanish ships, and here and there landing to get provisions or to attack the towns. Many were captured and, when identified as Protestants, turned over to the Inquisition. The majority agreed, for dear life, to join the Roman Catholic Church. A few who did not, were hanged or burned at the stake, but they did not generally make any effort to propagate their beliefs. Therefore, no Protestant movement resulted.
Of course, no Methodists were among them, Methodism still to be born some two hundred years later. When the Spanish and Portuguese colonies became independent, the new republics made Roman Catholicism the State religion and banned religious freedom. However, as early as 1816 Methodism found its way into a former French colony, now an independent republic--Haiti. President Pétion himself sent to Great Britain for missionaries. Two Wesleyans came and started work there. Again, notice has been preserved of a Methodist Sunday School for children of foreign residents, in 1827, in Buenos Aires. Between 1830 and 1850, missionary prospectors sent by the Methodist Episcopal Church visited South America, particularly the River Plate area, but with no result in terms of organized work.

In 1835 envoys of the same Church began exploring Brazil. This time an attempt to establish more or less regular work was made, and some advance registered, but in 1842 the effort was suspended and the missionaries withdrawn. Attention of the Board concentrated on Argentina, with more formal work starting in Buenos Aires in 1847. In 1855, the Rev. G. B. Carrow established an English day school there.

But it was only in 1860 when a transcendental step was taken. William Goodfellow began definite, systematic work among Spanish-speaking people in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, and a few years later his effort was greatly enhanced by the addition of Thomas Carter to the small missionary staff. It was indeed a great occasion when in 1867 the first regular church service in Spanish was held in Buenos Aires.

Meanwhile, Haitian Methodism had been considerably reinforced when in 1861 a group of Negro Methodist colonists from Connecticut settled in the island. In South America, the evangelization of Spanish-speaking people was in the late 60's energetically promoted by the Englishman John F. Thomson, a veritable "circuit rider". In 1868 he established residence in Montevideo, and next year formal mission work began there.

The striking results of all this endeavor to reach the nationals with the Gospel message through
Sunday schools, day schools, church services and, especially, the distribution of Scriptures and tracts, led the mission leaders in Argentina to definitely turn their main attention to Spanish-speaking Argentinians and Uruguayans. The original catering, first of all, to English-speaking residents gradually receded into a rather minor concern.

As a by-product of the American Civil War, Brazilian Methodism received notable strengthening. During and after the war, immigrants from the southern states settled in that country, especially in its southern provinces. In 1867, the Rev. J. E. Newman began work among them, and such a progress was made that in 1871 the missionary Board of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South took over. That was the beginning of the Igreja Methodista do Brazil, the strongest Methodist church in Latin America. In the River Plate, the work received considerable reinforcement when the Women's Foreign Missionary Society began educational work in Rosario, 1872, and Montevideo, 1879.

In Mexico the enforcement of the amendments to the Liberal Constitution of 1857, granting for the first time religious freedom, had been held up by Maximilian's Empire. But after his fall in 1867, the country was opened to Protestant missions. So in 1873, Bishop John Keener, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Bishop Gilbert Haven, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, almost at the same time planted Methodism in the capital city of Mexico. Their start was followed up, respectively, by a Mexican, Alejo Hernández, previously converted and trained in the United States, and by Dr. William Butler, the founder of Methodist missions in India.

The year 1877 marks a fresh impulse to Methodist missions in South and Central America, with William Taylor's famous tour. Although a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, he deliberately made his work independent from the Church's Missionary Society. He developed a system of self-supporting missions, and stirred up great interest in the Gospel in several countries, succeeding especially in planting missions in Peru, Bolivia, Chile and Panama.
But there were serious problems of organization and administration which hindered the progress of this otherwise magnificent endeavor. In the face of the strong external opposition, and of the irregular provision of salaries, and of other internal difficulties, many of the young missionaries became discouraged and gave up. The Taylor missions declined and finally disappeared. But others followed them up, harvesting whatever results had been obtained. By consolidating and expanding them, more steady missions and churches were established. By and by, these became officially incorporated into the missionary work of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in Brazil and of the Methodist Episcopal Church elsewhere.

The Methodist enterprise throughout South America was considerably strengthened and much better channeled by other famous missionary tours, those of the Italian immigrant Francisco G. Penzotti, converted in Montevideo. As a Methodist missionary and a representative of the American Bible Society, Penzotti established his residence in Callao, Peru, after some years of travel practically all over South America in several trips that made history not only for Methodism but for the Protestant cause at large.

His was a real saga of missionary zeal and heroic Christian devotion. In Bolivia he narrowly escaped being murdered. But it was in Peru where the impact of his apostolate became especially strong. There he suffered a long imprisonment, for no other "crime" than distributing the Bible and preaching the Gospel. Discovered in jail by a foreign traveler, his case made the headlines of American and British periodicals. The weight of international public opinion plus diplomatic pressure succeeded in having him liberated, and also in making Peruvian courts and officers of the law open the way for a broader interpretation of the establishment of Roman Catholicism as State religion, "excluding all other public worship."

While missions started in Paraguay, in 1884, Methodist work in Uruguay had become enthusiastic and strong enough to be able to send Christian workers in 1885 into Brazil, in order to make a start at Porto Alegre. About the same time, John E. Wright was laying
the foundations of solid Methodist work in Costa Rica, on Taylor's trail. And in 1893, another great step was taken—the organization of a South American Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, with the "districts" of Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, Chile and Peru.

In the Caribbean, besides Haiti, the English Free Methodists opened missions in Santo Domingo. Then in 1899, after Cuba and Porto Rico gained independence from Spain, American Methodism went in alongside other denominations. By the turn of the century Methodism was firmly established in Latin America, with growing signs of naturalization in many countries.

During the first quarter of the present century, Methodist work faced with success the serious crisis brought about in Mexico by the Revolution, in which many Methodists, as well as other Protestants, participated in a purely personal capacity, while others migrated to the United States. Temporarily weakened by the situation, Methodism soon recovered and its work went on. To the south long strides were made in Bolivia, Peru, Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina and Chile. In 1916, Panama, where Taylor had established in his day a mission, was added to the Methodist missionary map. Significantly enough, this time Mexican Methodism heard the trumpet call, and responded by sending one of its pastors to serve as a missionary there.

The year 1930 must be marked with a golden star in the history of Latin American Methodism. For it was in the spring of that year when the merging of northern and southern missions into a national autonomous body—the Methodist Church of Mexico—took place. How meaningless that division resulted for us Mexicans is seen in the fact that the Methodist Episcopal Church (North) worked especially in the south, while the Methodist Episcopal Church, South did it especially in the north! In September of the same year, Brazil followed suit, and the Methodist Church of Brazil was organized.

A transcendental stage in Latin American Methodism had thus begun. Former "missions" were developing into full grown national churches, within the unbreakable
fellowship of world Methodism. A process started, in very recent years, that has resulted in new structures and relationships, with affiliated Conferences in the River Plate, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Panama and Costa Rica. Each is now under a Latin American bishop, in association with Brazil and Mexico through a Latin American Council of Bishops.

********

Considered as a whole, Latin American Methodism has played an outstanding role in the cultural, social, moral and spiritual life of the people in that part of the continent. Its Christ-centered, Bible-based, ethically-oriented message has been of considerable and in some cases decisive influence. In the educational field, for instance, Methodist parochial schools have been, more notably in Mexico, the forerunners of the national rural education movement.

Methodist colleges have been, or were for a long time, among the finest in any country, and in many cases the pioneers in modern educational theory and methods. Just calling their roll is passing review to fine educational achievement--Ward College, in association with the Disciples of Christ in Buenos Aires; Crandon Institute, in Montevideo; Santiago and Concepcion Colleges, in Chile; Callao and Lima High Schools, in Peru; the American Institutes in La Paz and Cochabamba, Bolivia; Bennett College and the People's Institute, in Rio de Janeiro, and cooperating with the Presbyterians, Mackenzie College, in Sao Paulo, Brazil; the two Institutes in Puebla, the two High Schools in Pachuca, Palmore College in Chihuahua, and the Velasco Institute in Queretaro, all in Mexico; Seawall Institute, in Panama; Candler and Buenavista Colleges, in Cuba, and Collège Byrd, in Haiti.

In Brazil, the West Coast republics of South America, and Mexico, where a large proportion of the population are Indians, Methodist missions and churches have undertaken work among them, although perhaps not as extensively as other denominations. However, they have participated in cooperative work among the Indians of Matto Grosso, the thick Brazilian jungle. Some Methodist Indian projects, such as the one currently maintained among the Aymara Indians of Bolivia,
have deserved special commendation. A missionary authority, Sir Kenneth G. Grubb, considers this project "among the most striking of its kind in South America."

Medical work has also received special attention through clinics and hospitals, among which the ones in La Paz, Bolivia, and Chihuahua, Mexico, stand out. In social reconstruction and assistance, one would wish that very much more should have been undertaken, but the social centers in Santiago, Valparaíso and Concepción, Chile, and La Boca Mission in the heart of Buenos Aires' slums, must be mentioned.

As to agricultural missions, the farm "El Vergel," near Angol in Chile, has been pronounced by Dr. John A. Mackay, a former educational Presbyterian missionary and President of Princeton Theological Seminary, as the "most notable undoubtedly among types of rural work carried on in Latin America." This farm covers 3,800 acres, and includes a nursery, agricultural school, experimental station and regular church and evangelistic work. It is difficult to say what is happening in Chile today, but for many years practically all of the Chilean government's park and reforestation undertakings mainly depended on "El Vergel's" nursery. And from this farm came the finest apples in the country, on a par with the best produced in California or Florida.

At the same time "El Vergel," in the face of the acute agrarian problem which came to a peak under the Allende government and is still largely unsolved, made an interesting experiment by allotting a great proportion of its lands to "share renters". Dr. Mackay describes the experiment as follows: "These (renters) become responsible for sowing a certain number of acres and receive a proportion of the produce. They are taught the best methods of doing the work, and how to produce the largest crops; they receive their money regularly; they are guided in the best use to make of it; they are prepared for a larger life. The work is carried on as a great partnership" (That Other America, p. 179).

Latin American Methodism has been very active in Christian literature production and distribution. At
first, Methodist publishing concerns were established, such as the one in Mexico. Soon the needs began to be met of tracts, church magazines, Sunday school materials, Spanish and Portuguese translations of the Discipline and ritual, hymnbooks, while the American Bible Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society provided low-priced editions of the Spanish and Portuguese Bibles.

In due time the Methodists joined forces with other denominations in setting up cooperative publishing houses and bookstores, of which "La Aurora," in Buenos Aires, "El Sembrador," in Santiago, Chile, and Casa Unida de Publicaciones, in Mexico, are first rate examples. For many years the main supply of Christian literature came from Spain, but during the last fifty years or so, the Latin American production has by far surpassed that source. There was a time when in a joint program sponsored by the Committee of Cooperation in Latin America, "La Aurora" and Casa Unida were publishing at the rate of one new title every week. Along this line, I now stop to pay a warm tribute of gratitude to the beloved memory of Dr. B. Foster Stockwell, the Methodist missionary with residence in Buenos Aires, to whom we owe so much, both as an author and as a wise, forward-looking editorial counsellor and guide.

Methodist cooperation in Latin America, in the field of Christian literature, is only one aspect of how the ecumenical spirit of world Methodism has been captured and preserved in the young churches of these lands. As in the Mother Churches' land and in every other land, wherever in Latin America cooperative programs and projects are set on foot, Methodists are always found in the vanguard lines.

Everywhere Methodist churches are members of National Councils or Federations of Churches. They participate in union seminaries in the River Plate, Mexico, Cuba, and for a time, Chile, where a union theological institution functioned up to some thirty years ago. They also cooperate in the Bible Institute, Costa Rica, and in the Board for Christian Work in Santo Domingo. Both the Methodist Church of Brazil and the Methodist Church of Mexico are unit members
of the World Council of Churches. And now that the Roman Catholic Church is opening itself to fellowship with other Christian churches, many Methodists of Latin America have been among the Protestants who are already engaged in fraternal dialogue and in some limited forms of practical cooperation with Roman Catholics, although many other Methodists are still very cautious or even reluctant to respond.

This is particularly noticeable in the production and distribution of Scriptures, in which Catholics are now participating hand in hand with Protestants, officially in some cases. Also in such projects as the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Bible study groups, Christian family conferences, seminars and informal social gatherings. Significant of this trend is the fact that the Latin American Council of Methodist Bishops was officially invited to send an observer to the meeting in Medellin, Colombia, August, 1968, of the (Catholic) Latin American Episcopal Conference. It was the present speaker's priceless privilege to have been such an observer, one of the eleven from non-Catholic constituencies. He has also been asked for two consecutive years to lecture at the main Catholic Seminary at Mexico City on "The History and Doctrines of Methodism."

*****

Between 100 and 140 years, as we have seen, of the presence of Methodism in Latin America is only a short span in the life of a movement and a continent. Indeed we are thankful for the successful planting, progress and achievements of Methodism in these lands. When returning, however, to the specific subject of this lecture, one cannot but experience a deep sense of humility and attrition. Most of the time has been taken already by what was intended to be merely a sort of historical preface to our main theme. But in a way, it has been much beyond a simple "preface". For the life and work of Latin American Methodism, modest as they may have been, are in themselves a contribution of some kind to Methodism in its world dimension. First, even in a purely geographical sense, for it has helped to round out Wesley's vision of a world parish. But it is rightful to expect much more from Latin
America than just being a big patch added to Methodism's map. It is when one thinks in terms of a creative contribution that the sense of inadequacy becomes almost overwhelming. How little to be accounted for!

Latin American Methodism has to a large extent been a copy or reflection of American Methodism. Its cultural and religious patterns have been closely imitated, with no great deal of indigenous creativity. It is, of course, beneficial to imitate positive traits, but our imitation has often times lacked discernment. So much so that it has generally resulted in an inhibition of creative, imaginative self-expression.

Perhaps the field in which Latin American Methodism has shown a larger measure of, shall we say, originality, is literature, particularly poetry and to some extent hymnology. Names of such Methodist poets as the Uruguayan Edgardo Ubaldo Genta, who has been called by literary critics "The Songster of America" (America in our continental sense), and the Argentinian Sante Uberto Barbieri, whose delicate poems breathe with the spirit of the great mystics, come at once to the fore.

Methodist hymnology has been enriched by such composers and poets as Vicente Mendoza and Epigmenio Velasco. Among the novelists Justo Gonzalez Carrasco, Daniel P. Monti, S. U. Barbieri, Daniel Hall, Pedro N. Urcola and Victoriano D. Baez must be mentioned. But for the lack of time, other names could be brought forward in other fields also, such as essay, biography, church history, drama, Christian education, et cetera.

Your speaker had the privilege of assisting, as Secretary of Christian Literature for the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America, in the development of a cooperative literature program, and he is a personal witness to the able and earnest contribution of Methodist writers, editors and publishers not only to Methodism but to the Christian cause in general.

This being so, the question comes up at once of whether or not there has been a Latin American contribution to Methodism in the field of theology. Once in a while one hears people talking not only about the possibility but even the imperative need for
Latin American Contribution

a "Latin American theology". Not to say that others sometimes become even more particular, and turn up demanding a "Mexican," or "Peruvian," or "Brazilian" or "Argentinian" theology!

But in the first place, speaking of Methodism, one must be reminded of the fact that from John Wesley himself, "the people called Methodists" have not been terribly concerned about systematic theological formulations. Surely there is what might be called a "Methodist theology". But it appears made up rather of emphases on general biblical and evangelical tenets than of an elaboration of strong ideological peculiarities. This has not, of course, discouraged sound theological work among Methodists, but it has not resulted in giving theological formulations the degree of priority they have in other denominations.

I am not calling attention to this fact as an excuse for the lack of important theological work among Latin American Methodists. For there are other reasons making us Latin American Methodists directly responsible for not being able to name among ourselves any theologian ranking close to a Borden P. Bowne, a Harris Franklin Rall, a Nels Peré or a Georgia Harkness. And again the main reason is that in our theological thinking we have simply followed on the tracks of American Methodism. Even Wesley's Sermons, obligatory in Conference studies, generally receive only a more or less perfunctory treatment--a hurried scanning, a superficial "exam," and back to collect dust in the shelves again!

And not even theologians such as the ones mentioned before, and others of equal standing, are seriously studied. Most of our preachers are still in the theological limbus, quoting Moody, Spurgeon or, the farthest out they go, Tillet's Personal Salvation. There are exceptions that, as the saying goes, only confirm the rule. Our seminaries are endeavoring to make students acquaint themselves with the most significant trends in contemporary theology, and here and there one hears a young preacher venturing to quote or refer to Barth, Niebuhr, Tillich, Bultmann and, being the day's fashion, even Bonhoeffer. On the other hand, especially in the southern cone of the continent, men
like Barbieri, José Míguez Bonino and Emilio Castro stand out already as our most solid theological thinkers.

But so far, I do not believe there has been any strong Latin American contribution to Methodist or general theological thought. Recently, from other denominational quarters, including Roman Catholicism, theories or systems have been brought forward such as the so-called "Theology of Liberation" and other brand new theological schools. They have influenced some of our Methodist thinkers and writers, but none of them, I believe, have to date made an outstanding contribution to these or any other theological movements.

Some years ago two important quarterlies, launched under the keen concern of Dr. Stockwell, Adam F. Sosa and other South American Methodists, El Predicador Evangélico ("The Evangelical Preacher") and Cuadernos Teológicos ("Theological Papers"), undertook to stir up hermeneutical and theological interest among pastors, theological students and broad-thinking laity. But the response to these publications was not sufficient, from the financial standpoint, and their lights soon went out. The field, however, is still wide open, and there is no reason to lose hope that some day Latin America shall contribute some original and solid theological thinking to world Methodism.

Perhaps the main contribution that Latin American Methodism has already made is its strong emphasis on evangelism. Planted in an environment in which the question was to win converts or perish, it has grown at a large pace through sustained evangelistic effort. But again, its evangelistic programs have largely been an imitation, and sometimes a poor imitation, of American programs and methods. It is one of those marvels of God's grace and loving forbearance that even so, many people were reached and thus the churches grew in the face of serious difficulties. It was the result of the believers' sincere faith and staunch testimony rather than of wise, well-thought and planned evangelistic programs and procedures.

The experience gained by Latin American Methodism with its positive and negative points, its successes and failures, could be of value to Methodism in other
lands. For it has been the experience of evangelistic work in partially Christianized lands—a most peculiar situation, so different from the one prevailing in outright non-Christian areas. As in the case of other denominations, Methodist witnessing met with immediate and bitter opposition. Nowhere else, except in Spain, whose religious tradition and intolerant spirit Latin America inherited, has Methodism had to face such a situation. It had perforce either to improvise its approach and strategy or, as we have seen it happening at certain times and in certain sections, to simply give up, at least temporarily.

To a large extent, missionaries undertook the task of evangelization through trial and error. In South America, for instance, Methodism was at first concerned only with the spiritual needs of foreign, English-speaking constituencies. A mere chaplaincy was contemplated, with practically no real evangelistic motivation. By and by, due mainly to the spontaneous interest of Spanish-speaking nationals, limited work began among them. It was mainly educational, medical and of social assistance. In some cases, as in Taylor's missions, the abstention from any evangelistic work was officially stated.

Many missionaries, however, felt a sense of true evangelistic obligation. This, added to requests from national inquirers, finally made the missionary enterprise broaden its aims and scope. But partly because of the strong opposition of a fanatical environment, partly because of the missionaries' own inexperience in coping with such a situation, a general strategy was developed that mainly relied upon hardhitting anti-Catholic controversy.

In some cases, this only aggravated the opposition of the people so approached, but in others this method made an impact that brought back a harvest of converts. Fanatical prejudices, on one side, and this aggressive, at times offensive method, on the other, gave Latin American Methodism a sad harvest also of martyrs. Most regrettable is the fact that often the persecution overtook people not engaged in this frontal attack, whose witness consisted of a changed life, full of the spirit of service and beaming with patience and love.
of their neighbors.

On the whole, Methodism thus grew mainly following the hardest path. This strategy prevailed up to only a decade or so ago, and in many quarters it is still considered as the only "orthodox" way in evangelism. In recent years, however, Roman Catholicism has experienced a renewal which is slowly but steadily gaining momentum in Latin America itself. A great biblical revival is a part of it and, to some extent, its very source. This is radically changing the situation, especially with the new ecumenical opening represented by Vatican Council II.

These events, which must be rated as among the greatest religious happenings of the present century, have helped to deepen the growing sense of inadequacy already felt by many Protestant leaders in Latin America. More and more there is an awareness of the urgent need of a thorough revision of our evangelistic theory, policy and methods. How could it otherwise be, when Catholics, including parish priests and members of the hierarchy, are now welcoming us Protestants as "brothers and sisters in Christ"?

Introducing the Bible in the vernaculars has traditionally been the spearhead of Protestant evangelism in Latin America, generally against Catholic resistance to accept what had been considered as a "Protestant book". But now, Roman Catholic authorities not only are recommending but also promoting the study of the Bible, and asking the Bible Societies to assist them in its distribution. Furthermore, Protestant translations and editions of the Bible may now be used by Catholics, so much so that, for instance, the popular version of the New Testament, Dios llega al hombre ("God comes to man") carries a printed official Catholic endorsement, and has become a textbook in the Catholic schools of Argentina.

A few years ago, some Catholic bishops from Latin America, attending the Vatican Council, approached the French Protestant Taize Community with a request to assist in a continental campaign of distribution of Scriptures. As a result, a Catholic-Protestant team of scholars produced a New Testament Spanish version,
of which two million copies were distributed free in Latin America, mainly through the Catholic dioceses. The costs of the translation and of the edition were met by the Taize Community.

An interconfessional edition of the New Testament has just come off the press in Spain. It is a revision, in which representatives of the United Bible Societies participated, of a translation by Father Felipe de Fuenterrabia, and it is being distributed in Latin America both by Catholic agencies and Bible Societies. Then, in the current preparation of the popular version of the Old Testament, sponsored by the United Bible Societies, a Catholic Bible scholar from Colombia, under official appointment by his superiors, has been participating.

On the other hand, the Penzotti Institute, an agency of the Societies for intensive training in the distribution of Scriptures, is frequently called upon by Roman Catholic ecclesiastics to conduct training courses for their people. And some of the materials produced by the Societies' Promotion Department in Latin America are widely used by Roman Catholics with only a change in the imprint.

At the Bishops' Conference in Medellin, a Mexican bishop went far enough to suggest that there is no reason why Latin America could not be challenged by a joint Catholic-Protestant proclamation of the Gospel message. He said that the basic message—the kerygma—is the same, and that it is only at the catechistical stage following the proclamation that we part company. These and other facts are naturally urging a radical revision of our churches' evangelistic approach and methods. Protestants in Latin America, including Methodists, are still generally holding fast to the old controversial methods of evangelism, but here and there promising signs can be seen that awareness of the imperative need for such a revision is already growing among them.

In some quarters leaders are beginning to give a serious second thought to the meaning of true evangelization. The biblical meaning of evangelism in terms of witnessing is being recaptured. Dialogue is beginning to replace polemics, sharing one's experience instead of pressing others to give up theirs. There
are signs that this approach will not be entirely repugnant to Catholics, but perhaps even welcomed. In a talk given to professors and students of a Protestant seminary in Mexico City, Bishop Sergio Mendez Arceo, of Cuernavaca, said to his audience: "Please ask your people to stop attacking such Catholic beliefs as auricular confession, or the devotion to the saints, or speaking evil of priests, when they talk to Catholics. Ask them to tell them instead: 'This is what Christ means to me, what Christ has done for me.'" This, he stressed, is what they should tell to Catholics.

Once Latin American Methodists grasp the fact that the doors stand wide open for them to discharge their evangelistic obligation in terms of a deepening of their own experience of the saving grace of God in Christ, and then witnessing in humility and charity to what he means to them, to what he has done for them, a substantial change will take place in their programs and methods of evangelization. And that, in the practical sphere rather than in the realm of theological speculation, might well become the most important Latin American contribution to Methodism.

A.M.E. ZION CHURCH CALENDAR

August 1-2, 1975 Connectional Council, First Church, Los Angeles, Calif.
August 3-8, 1975 Woman's Home and Foreign Missionary Quadrennial Convention, Los Angeles, California
May 5, 1976 General Conference of the A.M.E. Zion Church, Chicago, Illinois