

SOUTH AMERICAN PROBLEMS

ROBERT E. SPEER

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BY

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PREFACE

We call the South American people a Latin people. In part they are. The foreign blood that is in them is for the most part Latin blood. The upper class is dominantly and sometimes purely of Latin blood. But a great proportion of South American blood is not Latin but Indian. Nevertheless, the charm of the Latin inheritance is over the whole continent and no one can visit it and not come away without grateful memories of a warm-hearted, quick-minded, high-spirited people, citizens of a mighty land and forerunners of a mighty future. And the easy course for one who is asked to present his impressions is to picture the surface life of these nations and pass by the great political and intellectual and moral problems which they are facing. This easy course is not the course which can secure much help for South America and it cannot carry us very far toward a worthy understanding of our own duty.

The only things of real interest are, first, the facts as they are, and second, what the facts can and ought to be. We make no real headway by evasion and concealment, by rosy deception and smooth flatteries. We need first of all to look squarely at the

truth. That is what is attempted here. It is not attempted in any Pharisaical spirit. It is attempted with full acceptance of the principle, "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." No honest American can flinch from the straightest and sternest judgment of his nation and he will not for a moment dodge the reaction upon himself of the contention of this book.

That contention is that where such need exists as exists in South America, there is a call for every agency which can do anything to meet it. The inevitable corollary is that if such need or any need exists in North America which South America or Europe can help us meet, it is their duty to give and it will be our pleasure to have their help.

The difficulty in analyzing the South American situation lies in the need of discriminating between the responsibility of the South American religious system and the burden of the racial inheritance. Some lay the full load upon one, some upon the other. It belongs to both. Any Church would have found the problem difficult. Any race would have been depressed and retarded by the South American ecclesiastical institutions.

Some students deprecate all such judgments as harsh and intolerant. They say that we must judge men and institutions by their conditions and their age, that a just sense of the relativity of moral principles will lead us to overlook facts which in another

age or in other lands would appall us. On the other hand, we are content to take the view of the greatest Roman Catholic historian of the last generation, Lord Acton. It had become "almost a trick of style," say the editors of his famous volume on "The History of Freedom and Other Essays," "to talk of judging men by the standard of their day and to allege the spirit of the age in excuse for the Albigensian Crusade or the burning of Hus. Acton felt that this was to destroy the very bases of moral judgment and to open the way to a boundless scepticism. Anxious as he was to uphold the doctrine of growth in theology, he allowed nothing for it in the realm of morals, at any rate in the Christian era, since the thirteenth century. He demanded a code of moral judgment independent of place and time, and not merely relative to a particular civilization. . . . It is this preaching in season and out of season against the reality of wickedness, and against every interference with the conscience, that is the real inspiration both of Acton's life and of his writings.

"It is related of Frederick Robertson of Brighton, that during one of his periods of intellectual perplexity he found that the only rope to hold fast by was the conviction, 'it must be right to do right.' The whole of Lord Acton's career might be summed up in a counterphrase, 'it must be wrong to do wrong.'"

And as it is always wrong to do wrong, so also it is always right to do right. That is why it is both the right and the duty of true Christians of every Church and of none more than of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States to give sympathy and help to the aspiring people of South America who are wrestling with great problems and who deserve in their wrestling the good-will and practical aid of all friendly men.

No publications on South America are richer in information than those of the Pan-American Union in Washington, formerly known as The International Bureau of the American Republics. Readers wishing the latest statistics and reports from the South American nations should write to the office of the Union.

R. E. S.

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SOUTH AMERICAN
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CHAPTER I

THE GREAT PAST

I. *The early peoples.* The origin and character of the earliest South American civilization are completely hidden from view. The most ancient traces of man on the continent are the "kitchen-midden" found on the coast of Peru, consisting of sea shells and refuse, mixed with fragments of earthen pots and ashes and occasionally the implements used by these primitive people. After these men, who lived on sea-food, there came more advanced tribes of whom we know nothing except what may be inferred from their pottery and textures found in the deepest layers of the soil. This development, such as it was, was confined to the sea coast. It was followed by a wonderful civilization on the high tablelands. Where this civilization came from is a mystery. We know *nothing* of how long it lasted or what its nature was except as its architectural ruins show that it had Oriental kinships and that it was as interesting as it was powerful. These ruins can be seen well to-day at Tiahuanaco, in Bolivia, just south of Lake Titacaca. Immense stone pillars and gateways, which must have been brought from great distances, prove that a people lived on these high tablelands in centuries which we cannot fix now, akin to the race which left its massive monuments in Central America and Mexico,

and capable of as great achievements as the ancient Egyptians. Of their ideas and language we know nothing; but it is evident that their influence extended from Colombia on the North to Chile on the South, and as far as Tucuman and the Gran Chaco in what is now Argentina.

This ancient pre-Inca civilization disappeared centuries before the discovery of America. Its remains, however, were scattered over the whole Andean plateau and "on this base of an ancient culture, not entirely lost in its effects, although its remembrance had disappeared from the memory of men, a new era of splendor easily revived" under the dominion of the Incas.¹ Prescott's "History of the Conquest of Peru" presents the classic picture of the Inca civilization, but it is hard to separate fact from fable in the authorities on which all such accounts must be based. *The Incas had no written language or literature*, and while "there exist ancient chronicles written by some of the conquerors and missionaries . . . it is impossible to place absolute confidence in these narratives."² So that the real character of the empire of the Incas and the conditions of the South American people at the time of the Spanish conquest are but uncertainly known to us. It seems clear, however, that there was a widespread, socialistic, theocratic civilization organized and administered by the Incas, and reaching from Colombia to central Chile and the Argentine. Wonderful schemes of irrigation and not less wonderful systems of roads were constructed. Armies were organized which brought the whole Andean plateau under the Inca sovereigns, who appear to have possessed from the eleventh century,

¹ Garland, "Peru in 1906," 5.

² Ibid., 11.

when tradition says they first came upon the scene, a sacred, semi-divine character. The Inca empire had reached its greatest prosperity in the generation before the Spaniards came, and the disruption of that prosperity by civil war was one of the conditions which played into Pizarro's hands when, with a handful of audacious desperadoes like himself, he came for glory and gold.

Apart from the Incas the only other great people in South America, whom we can identify, were the Caras of Ecuador. Tradition says that they came from the South in the seventh century and invaded the seaboard of central Ecuador, and by the thirteenth century the outlines of their empire, which was ruled by a male succession, appear. The Cara kingdom reached its zenith at the end of the fourteenth century, after which it was overthrown and absorbed by the Incas. The Caras were a vigorous stock, however, and survived the Inca conquest and also "outlived the decimating tyranny of the Spaniards, so that ninety-five per cent of the present population [of Ecuador] is composed of their descendants."¹

The Incas and the Caras are the only South American races which attained any sort of organized and advanced civilization. And their civilization was weak and inarticulate. History has shown us in their fate the frailty of a socialistic order. Under the Incas the State controlled everything—agriculture, commerce, marriage, work and play. The result was that when the central government fell, the whole civilization collapsed.

Those thousands of functionaries who spent their lives in superintending the furniture, the dress, the work, the

¹ Dawson, "South American Republics," Vol. II, 289f.

very cookery, of the families under their charge, and inflicting corporal chastisement on those whom they surprised in a fault, might succeed in forming a correct and regular society, drilled like the bees in a hive, might form a nation of submissive slaves, but could never make a nation of *men*; and this is the deep cause that explains the irremediable collapse of this Peruvian society under the vigorous blows of a handful of unscrupulous Spaniards. It was a skilfully constructed machine, which worked like a chronometer; but when once the mainspring was broken, all was over.¹

Beyond the empires of the Incas and Caras the native peoples were Indians with a primitive social and political order, not very different probably from the Indians of the present time. The strongest and most virile race among them were the Araucanians of Chile, who showed themselves well nigh unconquerable and whose sturdy, truculent qualities characterize the Chilean people of to-day. In Brazil, covering one-half of the continent, and with an Indian population whose size is absolutely unknown to us, there was only a stagnant and rudimentary civilization, and the Brazilian Indians melted away before the white man's coming even more pitifully than the Indians of the Andean plateau.²

The savage Indians of South America, whom the discoverers found, were tame and feeble in comparison with the Indians of North America, and while the civilization of the Incas surpassed that of the Aztecs in Mexico, their resisting power was as nothing in comparison with the energy and fierceness of the Aztec race. The differences between North and South America to-day are not more the transported differences between the Latin and the Germanic peoples

¹ Reville, "The Native Religions of Mexico and Peru," 198f.

² Dawson, "South American Republics," Vol. I, 298f.

than the continuance of the ancient and primitive dissimilarities. "It is a common misconception on the part of the English public that the racial basis of the South American peoples is Spanish or Portuguese. It is not so—it is Indian; for it is only another misconception to suppose that the native races were wiped out by the Conquistadores."¹ They were decimated by disease and misuse, but at the same time they were made the stock upon which the Latin blood from Europe was grafted. To this day no small part of the diversities of character among the South American republics is due to the differences in the Indian racial stocks—Quichua, Aymara, Araucanian, Guarany; and in the Latin racial grafts—Galician, Basques, Catalanian, Andalusian, Portuguese.

II. *The discoverers and explorers.* Brazil was one of the first parts of South America to be discovered and the men who really found it were not Spaniards but Portuguese, though Pinzon, a Spaniard of Palos, and one of the companions of Columbus, was the first European to see the new continent. Before Pinzon reached the limit of his journey, the mouth of the Amazon, Portugal had despatched Pedro Alvarez Cabral, who in April, 1500, sighted what is now the State of Bahia. The Portuguese were looking for such a treasure as Spain soon afterwards found in Peru and Mexico and upon Cabral's return and report, Amerigo Vespucci, whose name was given to the new world, and the greatest technical navigator of the age, was sent to explore. He looked for gold and spices and civilized inhabitants and found nothing but the brazil-wood, a dye wood well known and highly valued in Europe, of a bright red color which gave it

¹ *The Times*, London, South America Supplement, August 30, 1910, 11.