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CONTESTED SPACES:

PROTESTANTISM IN OAXACA,

1920-1995

by

KATHLEEN MARY MCINTYRE

B.A., History and Hispanic Studies, Vassar College, 2001

M.A., Latin American Studies, University of New Mexico, 2005

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

History

The University of New Mexico

Albuquerque, New Mexico

December, 2012

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DEDICATION

To my mother, Cassie Tuohy McIntyre, for always believing in me. Many thanks.

Do mo mháthair dhílis, Cassie Tuohy McIntyre, a chreid ionamsa ó thús. Míle buíochas.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It truly takes a *pueblo* to complete a dissertation. I am indebted to a long list of individuals and institutions in the United States and Mexico for supporting me throughout my investigation of religious conflict in Oaxaca. At the University of New Mexico I was generously funded by a two-year doctoral research fellowship from the Latin American and Iberian Institute. I also received short-term grants from the History Graduate Student Association, the Feminist Research Institute, and the Graduate Professional Student Association. I studied the Mixtec language in Oaxaca through the Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowship program. A 2010 dissertation completion fellowship from the American Association of University Women (AAUW) allowed me to dedicate a year to solely finishing research and writing the final draft.

I owe a great deal of gratitude to my dissertation chair, Linda B. Hall, and committee members Cynthia Radding and Elizabeth Hutchison who encouraged this project since its earliest phase and provided invaluable feedback for the final draft. I particularly thank my advisor, Professor Hall, for her constant support and enthusiasm. My warm appreciation is also extended to committee members Manuel García y Griego and Les W. Field for pushing me to think about my work in new and challenging ways.

From 2008-2009, the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (CIESAS-Pacífico Sur) sponsored me as a visiting researcher. Presenting an early chapter of this dissertation in the *semenario interno* gave me the opportunity to share my work with an incredible coterie of scholars including Margarita Dalton, Sergio Navarrette, Salvador Sigüenza, Daniela Traffano, and Jutta Blauert who all strengthened my approach to indigenous identity, the state, and religious conflict in important ways. In particular, I thank former CIESAS director Dr. Salomón Nahmad Sittón who permitted me to explore his personal papers from his years as Director of Indigenous Education and as Director of the National Indigenist Institute. CIESAS Librarian Ramiro Pablo Velasco did just about everything he could to make my research in Oaxaca go smoothly. From informing me of new works on religion in Mexico to helping me interpret census data and introducing me to other researchers, Ramiro was a good friend and a vast wealth of information that profoundly shaped my dissertation. Also at CIESAS, Maestro Raúl G. Alvarez Chávez accompanied me on several interviews and provided background for me on Mixtec Pentecostalism. Maestro Juan Julián Caballero helped me set up my initial research trips to the Summer Institute of Linguistics library in Mitla. Xicohténcatl Luna Ruiz was a loyal research partner during long days at the Centro de Coordinación Indígena (CCI) in Tlaxiaco.

Also in Oaxaca, Sergio Osorio Carrizosa and Laura Olachea Magriñá helped me with transcriptions and invited me for family meals and outings. Catechist Nacho Franco took me hiking in the Sierra Norte and helped set up my research in Oaxaca City's archdiocese archive. Nacho also made sure my translations of interviews did not lose any of their original meaning.

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I would also like to thank the staff of the Biblioteca Francisco de Burgoa, the Archivo General del Poder Ejecutivo del Estado de Oaxaca (AGEPEO), and the Archivo del Poder Judicial de Oaxaca (APJO) for providing a pleasant atmosphere for research and never tiring of my questions or requests for more document boxes.

At the Department of Religious Affairs, Edgar López took an early interest in this project and helped me set up some of my initial interviews. At the Welte Institute for Oaxacan Studies, librarian Gudrun Dohrmann went out of her way on several occasions to help me locate sources and set up meetings with local scholars. Fellow researcher Holly Worthen was a great companion at Welte. I also thank San Diego State anthropologist Ramona Pérez for her enthusiasm for my work while I was a student in her Mixtec summer program in Oaxaca City. SIL administrator Stephen Butler offered a welcoming environment and full use of the organization's library in Mitla. Finally, a special thanks to the municipal officials and families in Santiago Yosondúa and San Jerónimo Tlacochahuaya who shared their experiences and welcomed me into their homes.

My friends at the University of New Mexico provided immeasurable support throughout graduate school. Wendy Cervantes, María José Bosanko García, Yann Kerevel, Wendy Courtemanche, Brandon Morgan, Will Veeder, Brandi Townsend, Leah Sneider, Char Peery, Hilda Gutierrez, Marcial Martínez, Siobhán McLoughlin, Sandra Lara, Joseph Lenti, Colin Snider, Lucy Grinnell, Sue Taylor, and Erik Loomis made living in Albuquerque incredibly enjoyable. Special thanks to MJ for her input on my translations, Leah for editing and formatting the final manuscript, and Siobhan for feedback on earlier chapters. Sue read countless drafts and kept me on track throughout the entire writing process. In Poughkeepsie, my former advisor at Vassar College, Leslie S. Offutt, still provides constant support and interest in my academic and professional goals. Long-time friend and former classmate Andy Albertson continues to read my work and promptly address last minute editing questions.

My family has also provided incredible support throughout this project. I thank my parents, Bill and Cassie McIntyre, and my siblings, William, Kevin, Siobhán, and Seán, for reading parts of the manuscript, purchasing airline tickets so I could come home, and never asking me when I would finally finish. Nephews and nieces Patrick, Anne, Maggie, Luke, Nora, Ryan, Griffin, Declan, Maeve, Ciara, and Aine bring me incredible joy and remind me why I love teaching. My younger sister Tara passed away before I entered graduate school, but her creativity, humor, and passion for life imparted in me a strength I never knew I had. Most of all, I thank my husband Erik for his support along every stage of this project. I truly could not have finished without his love and encouragement. *Te amo.*

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CONTESTED SPACES: PROTESTANTISM IN OAXACA, 1920-1995

By

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M.A., Latin American Studies, University of New Mexico, 2005

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on intra-village religious conflict stemming from Protestant conversion in Oaxaca. Protestant expansion is nowhere more visible than in southern Mexico. Of the southern states, Oaxaca has the highest growth rate of Protestantism, increasing 531% between 1970 and 2000. From 2000 to 2010, it grew another 65%. Such rapid change brought serious conflicts in closely-knit indigenous villages. Asserting that "*en el pueblo, la costumbre es ley*" ("in the town, custom is law"), some communities argued that Protestant expansion created divisions and jeopardized communalism.

Religious competition challenged collective identity in indigenous villages and led to competing conceptualizations of tradition and ritual. Indigenous leaders, *evangélicos*, bilingual teachers, government mediators, U.S. missionaries, and the Catholic Church fought over who had the authority to determine the expression of legal culture and local variations in the exercise of power. Framed by the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and the Zapatista uprising in 1994—revolutions with very different conceptualizations of indigenous citizenship—I examine how Protestantism impacted social organization, political authority, and identities in native communities. Protestant

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conversion in these communities fueled broad discussions of indigenous rights, autonomy, and *local* citizenship.

Three-quarters of Oaxaca's 570 municipalities rule by a traditional governance system known as *usos y costumbres* (uses and customs). Due to such localized political allegiances, religious rituals play an important role in community adhesion. Converting to Protestantism is an individual religious choice and a decision with social, political, and economic implications for one's family and the entire community. This history of autonomy and geographical and political fragmentation, coupled with the struggle of the central government to enforce the Federal Constitution, has led to political stalemates over individual rights to exercise their religious beliefs and the collective rights of native peoples to set the social, political, and spiritual agendas of their communities. An examination of the growth of Protestantism illuminates the struggle over power dynamics in local indigenous communities and its intersection with regional and national authorities. Through their identification as evangélicos, Protestants united across political, geographic, and ethnic borders. In the process, they redefined what it meant to be indigenous, Mexican, and Christian.

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Chapter One: Introduction

On August 16, 1923, Lawrence Van Slyke wrote to the Presbyterian Mexico Mission Board outlining his yearning to evangelize indigenous peoples in the southern state of Oaxaca. Originally from western New York, Van Slyke intended to set up a missionary base in San Baltasar Yatzachi, a Zapotec community high in the Sierra Norte Mountains and a three-day mule ride from the Presbyterian Church's newly organized center in Oaxaca City. Making the case for the new mission, Van Slyke drew connections between indigenous evangelization and contemporary modernization projects of the Mexican state.

> The Indian is worth the best we have. Everyone who knows the Indians of Oaxaca regards the Serrano Indians as being among the most intelligent and most energetic in the state. There is a special interest in an effort to win to the Protestant religion the same race that produced Benito Juárez, the great Liberal of Mexico. He is quoted as having said that Protestantism is the natural religion for a republic, yet his own district and his own village are still Catholic. Aside from this sentimental reason, the fact remains that the great bulk of the population of the state is Indian; they will hold back the entire state until they are evangelized and educated, so that in reality, work among the Indians is the foundation work in this state.[1]

While Protestant missionary work had proliferated in northern Mexico after President Benito Juárez's Reform Laws (1857-1860), many indigenous regions remained fertile sites for missionaries like Van Slyke in the post-revolutionary 1920s.[2] With sixteen distinct ethnic groupings constituting the overwhelming majority of the state's

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[1] Lawrence P. Van Slyke, as quoted in W. Reginald Wheeler, *Modern Missions in Mexico* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1925), 280-281.

[2] For background to the Protestant opening in Mexico during the mid-to- late nineteenth century, see Wheeler, *Modern Missions in Mexico;* Melinda Rankin, *Twenty Years among the Mexicans: A Narrative of Missionary Labor* (Cincinnati: Chase & Hall, 1875)*;* and Monica Orozco, "Not to be Called Christian: Protestant Perceptions of Catholicism in Nineteenth Century Latin America" in *Religion and Society in Latin America: Interpretive Essays from Conquest to Present* (Maryknoll, NY:Orbis Books, 2009), 175-190.

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population, Oaxaca was an especially important evangelization zone. Today, natives still represent over half of the population of Oaxaca. Remarkably, the state is currently home to twenty-three percent of the nation's total indigenous population.[3] In the early twentieth century, as missionaries like Van Slyke ventured outside of Oaxaca City, they encountered a geographically and linguistically diverse Oaxacan state. Eight regions were dramatically isolated from each other by the peaks and valleys of the Sierra Madre mountain range. Populated villages spoke a combined 150 languages and although many of them were variants of a common language, most were mutually unintelligible.

Early Protestant missionaries accustomed to working in *mestizo* Mexico noted an ethnic and cultural divide as they ventured south.[4] As anthropologist Frederick Starr remarked in his 1895 survey of Indian tribes in Mexico: "There are two Mexico's. Northern Mexico to the latitude of the capital city is a *mestizo* country…Southern Mexico is Indian country; there are large regions, where the *mestizos,* not the Indians, are the exception."[5] Writing about Oaxaca specifically, Lucius C. Smith explained that "there are

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[3] Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (INEGI), *XIII* Censo de Población y Vivienda, 2010, Oaxaca. Margarita Nolasco, "Educación Indígena, Una Experiencia en Oaxaca," *México Indígena: INI: 30 Años Después* (México, Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1978), 254. Joaquín Rodríguez Palacios, interview with author, September 10, 2010, Oaxaca de Juárez.

[4] *Mestizo* is an ambiguous term. In its most simplistic form, it means individuals who are of Spanish and indigenous heritage. It is also socially constructed; one becomes *mestizo* by speaking Spanish, dressing in western clothing and shedding *costumbres del pueblo.* For the post-revolutionary Mexican government, it was essential to integrate indigenous Mexicans into mainstream *mestizo* culture. See Ronald Loewe, *Maya or Mestizo? Nationalism, Modernity and its Discontents* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011) for a discussion of indigenous identity in the contemporary Yucatán. See also Marisol de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos: The Politics of Race and Culture in Cuzco, Peru, 1919-1991* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 140-152, for a brief discussion of *mestizaje* as a post-revolutionary Mexican state project. Finally, see Lynn Stephen, "The Creation and Re-Creation of Ethnicity: Lessons from the Zapotec and Mixtec of Oaxaca," *Latin American Perspectives* 23:2 (Spring, 1996): 19-20 for a brief discussion of the construction of the indio/mestizo paradigm in Mexico.

[5] Frederick Starr, *In Indian Mexico: A Narrative of Travel and Labor* (Chicago: Forbes & Company, 1908), preface, v.

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more full blooded Indians here than in any other state of the Republic."[6] It is within what Starr and Smith identified as "Indian country" that I situate my study, "Contested Spaces: Protestantism in Oaxaca, 1920-1995."

Today, Protestant growth in Mexico is nowhere more visible than in southern Mexico. The states of Campeche, Chiapas, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, and Veracruz all have Protestant populations ranging from 12 and 20 percent.[7] While Oaxaca is at the lower end of this spectrum (15%), it has the fastest growth rate; between 1970 and 2000, Protestantism increased by 531%.[8] Most recently, from 2000 to 2010, it grew another 65%. Thus, when Starr toured Oaxaca in 1895, there were just 618 Protestants. One hundred and fifteen years later, the 2010 census documented 502,013 Oaxacan Protestants.[9] Such rapid religious change brought serious conflicts in closely knit indigenous villages. Asserting that "*en el pueblo, la costumbre es ley*," or "in the town, custom is law," some communities argued that expansion of Protestantism created divisions and jeopardized *comunalidad* (communalism). That Protestant converts increasingly abstained from traditional obligations when these activities benefitted the Catholic Church seemed to evidence these new divisions and the weakening of traditionally held local power based on collective rights.

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[6] Lucius C. Smith, "The People of the State of Oaxaca, Mexico," Eugene R. Smith, ed., *The Gospel in all Lands* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1893), 145.

[7] "Where Angels Fear to Tread: Evangelicals are Swooping on Long Ignored Regions Mexico, *The Economist,* May 24, 2012.

[8] Instituto Nacional Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), *XII Censo de Población y Vivienda,* 2000. It is essential to note that since 1990 INEGI census only counts the religious affiliation of Mexicans aged five years old and above in the religious category. This in part explains why individual Protestant churches might publish higher membership rates than the national census. However, anthropologist James W. Dow notes that since evangelical Protestant and fringe Protestant churches are constantly trying to attract members, their statistics may be inflated. See Dow, "Protestantism in Mesoamerica: The Old within the New," 3-5, in James W. Dow and Alan R. Sandstrom eds., *Holy Saints and Fiery Preachers: The Anthropology of Protestantism in Mexico and Central America* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2001).

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The state has had limited authority in Oaxaca for most of Mexican history. In remote regions, indigenous communities also retained considerable political authority and could refuse to send tribute or engage in other forms of resistance if the colonial government did not meet its end of a relationship. Local indigenous intermediaries negotiated with the colonial government and then later the Mexican state to maintain a small degree of autonomy. This centuries-long relationship allowed communities to assert agency either through local governance patterns or the benefit of distance from the capital city, and thus maintain religious and traditional continuity.

Two core components of this local autonomy resided in the practices of *tequio* and *cargo*. Tequio is a communal work obligation in which individuals contribute non-remunerated labor toward a project that will benefit the community as a whole. Examples of tequio collective work projects range from paving a road to repairing a health clinic's roof to renovating a colonial era Church's interior. The cargo system is a set of civil-religious hierarchical positions based on seniority in which men and sometimes women take responsibility for organizing religious and secular festivities and political leadership positions. Assigned cargos might include weekly sanitation collection, organizing the town's patron saint day celebration as a *mayordomía* (sponsor), or at the most prestigious ranking, serving as municipal president.

Within Oaxaca, three-quarters of the state's municipalities rule by this traditional governance system known as *usos y costumbres* (uses and customs). With 570 municipalities—more municipalities than all of the remaining Mexican states combined—much of Oaxaca still remains fragmented into small, semi-autonomous

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[9] INEGI, *Censo de población,* 1895 and *XIII Censo de Población y Vivienda,* 2010.

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political zones. In fact, 90% of Oaxaca's municipal counties have a population of less than 5,000 and 64% are composed of fewer than 3,000 residents. Due to such localized political allegiances, religious rituals also play an important role in community adhesion. Converting to Protestantism is not just an individual religious choice but a decision that has social, political, and economic implications for one's family and the entire community. This history of autonomy and geographical and political fragmentation, coupled with the struggle of the central government to enforce the federal constitution, has led to political stalemates over individual rights to exercise their religious beliefs and the collective rights of indigenous peoples to set the social, political, and spiritual agendas of their communities.

This dissertation focuses on intra-village conflicts and negotiation stemming from religious transformation brought on by conversion to Protestantism. But more importantly, this is also a study about power. Indigenous leaders, *evangélicos* (evangelicals), bilingual teachers, government officials, missionaries, and the progressive and conservative strains of the Catholic Church fought over who had the authority to determine the expression of legal culture, locality, and local variations in the exercise of power. The conflicts I describe in this dissertation are on the surface about spiritual beliefs but a more nuanced look reveals they are about who or what determines local, regional, and national identities. Given Oaxaca's peripheral status and geographic distance from the center of power in Mexico City, local indigenous communities had a long history of setting their own parameters for legal, spiritual, and cultural practices. Protestant converts threatened communal adhesion, leaving their communities vulnerable to outside penetration.

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My central research questions for this dissertation examine aspects of traditional indigenous practices and their intersection with the state government and Protestant organizations. How did Protestantism proceed in isolated, monolingual communities that adhered to strict civil-religious hierarchies? How did the introduction and growth of a religious alternative to Catholicism alter traditional rituals, social organization and local governance? And amidst this communal change, what was the Mexican state's role in balancing indigenous autonomy, rights, and self-determination with its commitment to protecting religious freedom? An examination of the growth of Protestantism in indigenous communities illuminates the struggle over power dynamics in local communities and its intersection with regional and national authorities. Debates over Protestant converts' reduced participation in tequio and cargo service speak to larger conflicts over the very localized nature of power and authority in Oaxaca, as well as the weakness of the Mexican state to protect its citizens from violence.

In this study, I argue that religious plurality challenged collective identity in indigenous villages, leading to competing conceptualizations of tradition and ritual. Tracing the historical interactions between North American missionaries, indigenous converts, government officials, and the Church hierarchy from the post-revolutionary period to the 1994 Zapatista uprising, I analyze how indigenous Protestants contested local power by modifying their participation in communal obligations, thereby challenging a localized sense of identification and status based on the earned prestige of all *ciudadanos* (citizens). Through their identification as evangélicos, indigenous Protestants united across political, geographic, and ethnic borders.[10] In the process, they

[10] Oaxacan converts, as in most of Latin America, generally do not refer to themselves as Protestants. Rather they use *evangélico*, *cristiano*, or *hermano*. These labels speak to their intimate and

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redefined what it meant to be indigenous, to be Mexican, and to be Christian. I focus mainly on municipal conflicts in the Central Valleys, the Mixteca Alta, the Sierra Norte, and the northern district of Cuicatlán. These regions possess substantial Protestant populations, exhibit high rates of both internal and external migration, and are home to large concentrations of monolingual native language speakers. Finally, these are also regions that had the longest sustained periods of conflict between Catholics and Protestants, some lasting over fifty years.

Protestantism in Mexico

Any discussion of Oaxacan Protestantism must first start with the state's most famous native son: Benito Juárez. The Liberal President's sweeping 1857 *Ley de la Reforma* drastically reduced the influence of the Catholic Church; resulted in the Religious Freedom Act of 1860, which officially separated Church and State; and paved the way for North American Protestants to legally evangelize Mexico.[11] Originally from the Zapotec village of Guelatao and illiterate and monolingual until he moved to Oaxaca

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personal relationship to Jesus Christ and each other as opposed to the more hierarchical Father/Priest and children/parishioners relationship in Catholicism. By excluding Catholics from the rubric of Christianity, they are emphasizing their personal, Christ-centered worship as opposed to Catholics, who include the Pope and the Saints as essential components of their belief system. In general, I use Protestant, Pentecostal, or fringe Christian to distinguish between historic, mainline Protestant denominations emerging from the sixteenth century European Reformation and newer Protestant denominations, who are shaped by their personal relationship with the Holy Spirit, and, finally, to what I call fringe Christians: not Protestant, Catholic, or Pentecostal but still Christian such as Jehovah Witnesses, Adventists, and Mormons. When applicable, I prefer to use the name of the particular denomination.

[11] The Religious Freedom Act of 1860 was a significant and controversial departure from the 1824 Constitution's treatment of the Catholic Church, which placed Catholicism as the state religion. The Federal Constitution of the Mexican United States, October 4, 1824, stated: *"The Religion of the Mexican Nation, is, and will be perpetually, the Roman Catholic Apostolic. The Nation will protect it by wise and just laws, and prohibit the exercise of any other religion whatsoever."* Prior to 1857, Protestant missionaries and Bible colporteurs entered Mexico for short periods of time but never were allowed to maintain permanent missions. The 1857 Liberal Constitution limited Catholic Church landholdings, clerical privileges, and essentially legalized Protestantism. See Edwin Munsell Bliss, *A Concise History of Missions*

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City at age twelve, Juárez anticipated Protestantism would offer competition for the Catholic Church and "force Indians to read rather than wasting savings on prayer candles for the Saints."[12] By reducing the power and privileges of the Church, Juárez hoped to modernize Mexico through secular education and a free market system. His Reform Laws launched a three-year civil war that led to a Conservative-backed French occupation from 1862-1867. The Liberal party ultimately triumphed, but, after Juárez's death in 1872, Mexico transitioned into the *Porfiriato* (1876-1911): a thirty-five year dictatorship in which social, political, and economic advancements were enjoyed by a handful of elite families, foreign investors, and the Catholic Church while the rest of Mexico grew poorer and more disenfranchised.

Bolstered by a railroad boom and the expropriation of Catholic Church real estate beginning in Juárez's *La Reforma*, Protestants made significant inroads in northern Mexico, establishing churches and opening schools. With the expansion of the railroad lines into Southern Mexico, missionaries set their sights on the indigenous populations of Chiapas and Oaxaca. In an 1868 article titled "An Invitation," Monterrey-based Presbyterian missionary Melinda Rankin detailed her goal of organizing the first "Evangelical Society" in Oaxaca; she believed "liberty of worship in Oaxaca" could be a "reality" if missionaries were "firm, consistent, and self-denying"[13] Due to delicate health and growing competition between U.S. missionary organizations that sliced up Oaxaca

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(New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1897), for background on U.S. missionary organizations in late nineteenth century Mexico.

[12] Benito Juárez, as quoted in Justo Sierra, *Juárez, su obra y su tiempo* (México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2006), 546. Original Spanish: "Éstos necesitan una religión que les obligue a leer y no les obligue a gastar sus ahorros en cirios para los santos."

[13] Rankin, *Twenty Years among the Mexicans,* 157-158.

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into different zones of influence, Rankin never made it to Oaxaca. But many other North American Protestants did. Methodists arrived in the state in the early 1870s.

As early Protestant missionaries arrived, they adapted worship spaces previously used by Dominican friars, Jesuits, and Conceptionist nuns. While they often complained of the "large and ugly crucifixes" that adorned their recycled churches, these spaces were logical choices for their work.[14] The Oaxacan Evangelical Society opened in 1871, it initiated weekly Bible discussion classes in a former Jesuit *Templo de la Compañía* that was built in 1579 and was located just a block from Oaxaca City's *zócalo* (main plaza).[15] In 1884, Methodists purchased the *Ex-Convento de San Pablo* (1529) a few blocks from *La Compañía.* Most of the original members of the Oaxacan Evangelical Society became Methodists and numbered eighty congregants in the city by1890.[16]

While canvassing rural Oaxaca, late nineteenth century Methodist missionaries frequently remarked on the ubiquitous Catholic churches and shrines in stark contrast to the relatively few priests serving the people. In his 1893 report for the Methodist Mission Society, Ohioan Lucius C. Smith observed:

> Nominally, these Indians are Roman Catholics, and if they were so in reality they would need the Gospel almost as much as if they were Buddhists or disciples of the false prophet. But really the religion of the Indians of this state is a crude mixture of the semi pagan superstitions of Rome and the wholly pagan

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[14] Lucius C. Smith, "The People of the State of Oaxaca, Mexico," Eugene R. Smith, ed., *The Gospel in all Lands* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1893), 147.

[15] The Jesuits turned *Templo de la Compañía* over to the archdiocese when the order was expelled from Spanish American in 1767. It then was used by the Order of the Immaculate Conception nuns until 1867 when the property was expropriated in compliance with the 1856 Lerdo Law, which limited collective landholding. The immense sixteenth century church property was used commercially for local vendors as well as for civic organizations. See Francie R. Chassen, *From Liberal to Revolutionary Oaxaca: The View from the South, Mexico 1867-1911* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 308-310, for a more detailed account of Liberal Governor José Esperón's (1872-1876) expropriation of Catholic Church and indigenous communal land holdings.

[16] *Annual Report of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Methodist Publishing and Mission House, 1890), 279.

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> superstitions of their ancestors of pre-Spanish times, and it is difficult to tell which predominates…What we have said seems to us sufficient to prove that the Indians of Oaxaca are generally in bondage to Satan, and need the labors of the Christian missionary as much as any people on the face of the globe.[17]

Such nineteenth century Protestant criticisms of Christian absence in Oaxacan communities were familiar tropes of twentieth century missionaries who bemoaned indigenous syncretic religious rituals. They also commonly complained that Catholics treated converts just as severely as they had Reformation era Protestants in Europe.

The 1910 Revolution that ousted Oaxacan native Porfirio Díaz brought new waves of Protestant missionaries to southern Mexico. Revolutionary leaders embraced the tenets of nationalism, agrarianism, and anticlericalism, and they saw Protestantism as a means to modernization and "defanaticization" of the almost exclusively Catholic population. The Mexican Revolution called for the incorporation and assimilation of Mexico's indigenous peoples into the fabric of the nation. Protestantism could help the government reach that goal through teaching Spanish and introducing market competition into traditionally isolated communities that identified more with their village than the nation. With its large monolingual indigenous population and high poverty rate, Oaxaca became a priority not only for the newly formed Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP/Ministry of Public Education) but also for Protestant missionary movements.[18]

Limited in funds and mobility during the Revolutionary period (1910-1920) most U.S. Protestant missionaries returned to the United States. Yet, expecting the volatile climate in Mexico to eventually improve, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Disciples of Christ, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, the American Bible Society, and the Young

[17] Smith, "The People of the State of Oaxaca," 148.

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Men's Christian Association (YMCA) convened in Cincinnati in July of 1914. There they carved out spheres of influence for their respective denominations' to be established upon their return to Mexico. When they did return, these organizations reconvened in Mexico City in 1919 to finalize their agreed upon missionary jurisdictions. Protestant organizations and support networks, including after 1948 the Mexican-founded Comité Nacional Evangélico de Defensa (CONEDEF/National Evangelical Defense Committee), looked to the federal government, not local leaders, to enforce Article 24 of the Mexican 1917 Constitution, which guaranteed religious freedom. These groups, however, were later overshadowed in Mexico by a powerfully connected North American Protestant organization. The non-denominational Summer Institute of Linguistics eventually dominated the Mexican Protestant landscape by collaborating with government entities from 1935 to 1979.

By the 1970s, a growing intellectual and indigenous rights movement argued that North American missionaries represented a serious form of cultural imperialism in Mexico. Paternalistic observations like Lucius Smith's comment that indigenous Oaxacans depended on Christian missionaries were turned on their head in the 1970s and 1980s when some indigenous communities fought to expel foreign missionaries from their villages and, in some cases, outright banned Protestantism. The state, once an important ally of Protestant organizations, recognized the political casualties of siding with North American bodies over indigenous Mexico. At the same time, proponents of indigenous rights struggled to strengthen their communities' rights to autonomy,

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[18] See Wheeler, *Modern Missions in Mexico,* 256-283 for Presbyterian interest in opening schools and increasing missionary work in indigenous Mexico.

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bilingual language instruction, and revitalization of *usos y costumbres*—local governance based on customary laws.

Demonstrating decreasing tolerance for Protestant evangelism, the Oaxaca City daily *El Oaxaqueño* published a political cartoon in 1983 denouncing the Summer Institute of Linguistics' (SIL) continued presence in indigenous communities. The artist depicted the Protestant Bible translation organization as Satan preying upon innocent indigenous peasants. Opposite Satan stood Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid, portrayed as the archangel Michael, ready to slay the cowering dragon of the Apocalypse. A destitute indigenous Oaxacan pulled President Miguel de la Madrid toward him for protection from the world's largest Protestant missionary organization's malevolent plan to destroy indigenous communities.

Separated by a century, it is tempting to use *El Oaxaqueño's* unsubtle depiction of the SIL and missionary Smith's 1893 criticism of Oaxacan Catholicism to frame the history of Protestantism in Oaxaca. Both evidence a contentious history with regional, national, and transnational implications. However, the cartoon and commentary hardly reveal the complexities that defined decades of religious conflict, and both oversimplify a crucial dynamic of Mexican religious change: Oaxacans were not merely vulnerable victims in need of government protection from Protestant missionaries nor were they slaves in bondage to Satan. As this study makes clear, they were crucial actors in a complex web of religious tradition, transformation, and negotiation.

In 1994, Mayans in the southeastern state of Chiapas demanded autonomy in the face of neoliberal economic policies that amended the agrarian reforms guaranteed in the 1917 Constitution. As a result of the Zapatista Revolution and persistent indigenous

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agitation for rights throughout Latin America, the Mexican government contemplated indigenous autonomy and self-determination at the regional level.[19] In 1995, looking to avoid its own indigenous uprising, the Oaxacan state government legalized usos y costumbres (customary law). While many of its villages had operated under customary law since either before the Spanish Conquest or beginning with the Conquest, the fact that the Oaxacan state government—the only state in Mexico to do so— officially recognized this model dramatically altered the trajectory of Protestantism in indigenous communities.[20] With 418 out of 570 Oaxacan municipalities governing by usos y costumbres, Protestant minorities were inevitably outvoted in public *asambleas.* In assemblies, elders convened with *ciudadanos* (citizens) in good standing in the community to vote on *tequios* (collective projects) and community policies. In a sense, by legalizing usos y costumbres, the state was allowing local communities to set the collective social pulse at the expense of minority rights. This respect for multiculturalism was a 180 degree change from the *indigenismo* of the 1920s that sought to assimilate indigenous Mexicans into the fabric of the *mestizo* nation.

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[19] 1992, the 500th anniversary of Columbus's "discovery" of the Americas, was also an important year for pan-indigenous organizing across the Americas. See Yashar, *Contesting Citizenship in Latin America* for a discussion of how framing social movements by indigenous identities has been particularly successful for movements in Bolivia and Ecuador but not so much in Peru.

[20] Scholars are divided over whether *usos y costumbres* is truly a vestige of pre-Hispanic governance or a colonial institution. For an argument supporting the colonial implementation of the cargo system, see John K. Chance and William B. Taylor, "Cofradías and Cargos: An Historical Perspective on the Mesoamerican Civil-religious Hierarchy," in *American Ethnologist* (12:1986): 1-26. In contrast to Chance and Taylor, Michael Kearney and Carole Nagengast describe *tequio* as "an ancient system of obligation that has been utilized by the Aztecs and Mixtecs for community projects," Kearney and Nagengast, "Mixtec Ethnicity: Social Identity, Political Consciousness, and Political Activism," *Latin American Research Review* XXV, (2:1990), 89. Finally, see also James B. Greenberg, "Sanctity and Resistance in Closed Corporate Indigenous Communities: Coffee Money, Violence, and Ritual Organization in Chatino Communities in Oaxaca," in *Class, Politics and Popular Religion in Mexico and Central America* (Washington D.C.: American Anthropological Association, 1990), 95-114, for a discussion of the *fiesta* system and civil-religious hierarchies.

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It is between these two revolutions with very different conceptualizations of indigenous citizenship –the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and the Zapatista uprising of the 1990s – that I place this study. Framed by these revolutions, I examine how Protestantism impacted social organization, political authority, and identities in indigenous communities.[21] Protestant conversion in these communities fueled broad discussions of indigenous rights, autonomy, and *local* citizenship. As this dissertation will demonstrate, Protestantism intersects with indigenous identity at sharp and complex angles, depending on one's insider/outsider positionality. Through an examination of religious conflicts, the contested dynamics of local versus state authority in defining, protecting, and negotiating indigenous identit(ies) is apparent. Local communities rejected the growth of Protestantism by articulating that religious competition fomented divisions, discouraged collective rights, and subordinated customary law at the very heart of indigenous communalism. Protestant converts, in contrast, argued that their new religious beliefs actually strengthened indigenous identity.

Literature on Protestant Growth

While anthropologists and sociologists have abundantly researched the impact of Mexican migration on community customs and rituals, the history of religious conflicts remains unexplored. Few scholarly studies on Protestant growth have focused on Oaxaca and virtually none have examined shifting interpretations of local and regional identities.

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[21] Throughout this dissertation I use the term 'indigenous peoples' to refer in general to native peoples in Oaxaca. I recognize that this term is one that was historically imposed upon natives during the Conquest period. When available, I try to refer to Oaxacans by their individual ethnic groupings. I also recognize that indigenous identity cannot be boiled down to an essentialist list of markers such as language or dress. Instead, I interpret identity in a more fluid sense and see it as especially strengthened or even reconstructed during times of resistance to outsiders.

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This study seeks to contribute to the slim corpus of scholarship on Protestantism in rural Mexico, using conflict as a lens into indigenous identities. By blending trends in religious and identity historiographies, I weave a richer tapestry of Protestantism in rural Mexico.

My understanding of the relationship between identity and tradition is influenced by an impressive body of scholarship on the rise of Protestantism in Latin America and in indigenous communities specifically. Jean-Pierre Bastian, Virginia Garrard-Burnett, David Stoll, David Martin, Sheldon Annis, Enrique Marroquín, Carlos Garma Navarro, and Lesley Gill have taken different historical, spiritual, economic, and gender-based approaches to examining what Martin aptly refers to as the explosion of Protestantism in late twentieth century Latin America.[22]

The spread of Protestantism in Latin America has profoundly impacted social organization in indigenous communities, yet pre-1990 scholarship barely explores the cultural complexities of the evangelical movement. As was the trend, most scholars framed Protestantism and its growth simply as North American cultural imperialism in Latin America. David Stoll's 1990 work *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?* questioned such pessimistic views on Protestantism's success. Stoll was particularly critical of scholarship of the 1980s that avoided rather than studying the evangelical

[22] For the foundational scholarship on the rise of Protestantism in Latin America, see David Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990); Virginia Garrard-Burnett, *On Earth as it is in Heaven: Religion in Modern Latin America* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1999); David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990); and, finally, R. Andrew Chesnut, *Competitive Spirits: Latin America's New Religious Economy* (Oxford University Press, 2007). For scholarship specifically on Mexican Protestantism, see Jean-Pierre Bastian, *Protestantismo y Sociedad en México* (México, D.F.: Ediciones Cupsa, 1983); Enrique Marroquín, El conflict religioso: Oaxaca, 1976-1992 (Oaxaca de Juárez: UABJO, 2007) and Kurt Bowen, *Evangelism and Apostasy: The Evolution and Impact of Evangelicals in Modern Mexico* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996). For Protestantism's impact on indigenous communities, see James Dow, "The Expansion of Protestantism in Mexico: An Anthropological View," in *Anthropological Quarterly* 78 (4:2005): 827-850; Carlos Garma Navarro, *Protestantismo en una comunidad Totonaca de Puebla* (México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1987); and, finally, Toomas

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boom in Latin America. Indeed, researchers in that decade often focused on older pre-Hispanic and syncretic religious rituals that Protestants rejected. Clearly, Latin American Protestantism was not a captivating topic. Stoll quipped, "Few of us go all the way to Oaxaca to listen to gospel hymns reverberating inside cement-block chapels."[23] Instead, a generation of scholars influenced by liberation theology's "preferential option for the poor" and its ideological underpinnings for socialist revolutions in Latin America focused on Church-State relations in dirty war era Latin America.[24] The boom in scholarly interest in Protestantism was initiated by seminal works from Martin and Stoll.

Virginia Garrard-Burnett is perhaps the most well known historian of Latin American Protestantism. She has edited and contributed to several prominent multi-authored works on the topic including *Rethinking Protestantism in Latin America* with David Stoll.[25] Garrard-Burnett's *Terror in the land of the Holy Spirit* (2011) offers an excellent account of Efraín Ríos Montt's use of evangelical Christian religious symbolism to justify the slaughter of Mayan *guerillas* from 1982-1983, the most violent

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Gross, "Protestantism and Modernity: The Implications of Religious Change in Rural Oaxaca," in *Sociology of Religion* 64:4 (2003): 479-498.

[23] David Stoll, review of *Holy Saints and Fiery Preachers: The Anthropology of Protestantism in Mexico and Central America*, edited by James W. Dow and Alan R. Sandstrom, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute,* 9:3 (September, 2003):595-596.

[24] For the foundational texts in liberation theology in Latin America, see Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1973) and Leonardo Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (Orbis Books, 1987). For an overview of liberation theology, see Phillip Berryman, *Liberation Theology* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987)*,* Christian Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology* (University of Chicago Press, 1991), Daniel H. Levine ed., *Religion and Political Conflict in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), and Paul E. Sigmund, *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). For an examination of CEBS in Oaxaca, see Valerie Ann MacNabb and Martha W. Rees, "Liberation or Theology? Ecclesial Base Communities in Oaxaca, Mexico," in *Journal of Church and State 25* (Autumn, 1993): 723-749.

[25] Virginia Garrard-Burnett and David Stoll, eds., *Rethinking Protestantism in Latin America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); Garrard-Burnett, ed., *On Earth as it is in Heaven: Religion in Modern Latin America* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2000); Garrard-Burnett, "'Like a Mighty Rushing Wind': The Growth of Protestantism in Contemporary Latin America," in *Religion and Society* in

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years of Guatemala's thirty-six year civil war. [26] While the Reagan administration and the Religious Right supported Ríos Montt in his quest to contain leftist guerrilla organizations, Garrard-Burnett carefully avoids the earlier trend of dismissing the growth of Latin American Protestantism as North American cultural imperialism. Her work supports my view that Protestantism is not simply imposed as a product of North American imperialism but rather includes its own internal factors that make indigenous Latin Americans active agents in their own religious choices. I am not discounting the impact of well-funded and often pro-U.S. missionary organizations. Rather I take issue with the trope of the 1980s that identified indigenous Protestants as simple victims of "imperialismo Yanki."[27]

Nationalism played an important role in both Protestantism's growth and its vulnerability, and new scholarship reflects this reality. Treating the Mexican case, historian Deborah Baldwin traced the important connection between Protestantism in northern Mexico and the development of revolutionary ideologies in that region. Post-revolutionary Protestant missionary organizations collaborated with many state modernization projects in indigenous communities. Baldwin also acknowledges the

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Latin America: Interpretive Essays from Conquest to Present (Maryknoll, NY: Orbris Books, 2009), 190-206.

[26] Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala under General Efrain Rios Montt, 1982-1983* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

[27] Given the documented economic and political connections between the United States and military dictators in many Latin American countries during the 1970s and the early 1980s, it is not surprising that political scientists, anthropologists and human rights' activists churned out early and frequent denunciations of Protestant organizations in Latin America, especially the Summer Institute of Linguistics. For a sampling of literature condemning Protestant organizations such as the SIL, see Søren Hvalkof and Peter Aaby, *Is God and American? An Anthropological Perspective on the Missionary Work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics* (Copenhagen, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 1981); David Stoll, *Fishers of Men or Founders of Empire? The Wycliffe Bible Translators in Latin America* (Zed Press, 1982); and Laurie Hart, "Story of the Wycliffe Translators: Pacifying the Last Frontiers," *NACLA,* 10 (December 1973):15-31.

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sustained presence of Protestant women as teachers and staff but offers little analysis of gender relations in missionary organizations.[28]

While the historiography on Mexican women's role in post-revolutionary educational systems, anticlericalism, and agrarianism is deep, emphasis on the role of Protestant women in post-revolutionary Mexico remains rather sparse.[29] Nicole Sault's 2001 analysis of the impact of Protestant conversion on the *compradazgo* (God parenthood) system for Zapotec women represents an important beginning to scholarship on Protestantism and gender in indigenous Mexico. Sault argues that due to a strong sense of social-religious obligation that Catholic women possess as godmothers, Zapotec women convert at slower rates than Zapotec men. Her work contradicts the findings of Elizabeth Brusco in Colombia who argues that conversion to Protestantism resulted in a form of female collective action by elevating domesticity and reattaching badly behaved husbands to the family.[30] However, by focusing on a gender complementarity model instead of a patriarchal one, Sault downplays important discussions of spousal abuse and binge drinking since she holds that Zapotec men and women enjoy "egalitarian

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[28] Deborah Baldwin, *Protestants and the Mexican Revolution: Missionaries, Ministers, and Social Change* (University of Illinois Press, 1990), 81. Historian Monica Orozco's forthcoming monograph on U.S. missionary organizations in late nineteenth century Mexico promises an in-depth analysis of gender in the conversion process, though her focus remains centered on the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in northern Mexico. See Orozco's article "Not to be Called Christian: Protestant Perceptions of Catholicism in Nineteenth Century Latin America" in *Religion and Society in Latin America,* 175-190. See also Susan M. Yohn, *A Contest of Faiths: Missionary Women and Pluralism in the American Southwest* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), for a comparison of Presbyterian female missionaries working in Hispano-Catholic communities of northern New Mexico.

[29] See Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997), for an in-depth examination of new opportunities for women in the Department of Education. See Marjorie Becker, *Setting the Virgin on Fire: Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán Peasants, and the Redemption of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), for women and agrarian ideology, and Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), for an analysis of women's organizing in post-revolutionary Yucatán.

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relationships."[31] Sault's work nonetheless is a pioneering look at the impact of Protestant conversion on Catholic compadrazo obligations.

Historian Todd Hartch's 2006 corrective analysis of the Summer Institute of Linguistics provides an excellent institutional history of the controversial missionary group, arguing against the polemical or hagiographic accounts of the SIL's relationship with indigenous Mexico. Building on Hartch, I integrate sources that explain how indigenous community elders and Indigenous rights organizations interpreted the impact of Protestantism on their communities.[32] My study seeks to present a more nuanced view of Protestantism's impact on indigenous identities by exploring a connection between cultural revitalization movements that began in the 1970s in Oaxaca and the legacy of one Mixtec community's conflicts with the SIL. However, my study diverges from Hartch's mostly institutional history of the SIL through inclusion of oral histories that enable me to privilege indigenous perspectives.

Swiss historian Jean-Pierre Bastian's work on Latin American Protestantism as an act of "social and political" dissident has also influenced my own work in important

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[30] Elizabeth Brusco, *The Reformation of Machismo: Evangelical Conversion and Gender in Colombia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).

[31] Nicole L. Sault, "God parenthood Ties among Zapotec Women and the Effects of Protestant Conversion," in James W. Dow and Alan R. Sandstrom, eds., *Holy Saints and Fiery Preachers: The Anthropology of Protestantism in Mexico and Central America,* (Westport,CT: Praeger, 2001), 117-146. Sault's case study is based in a Zapotec community in the Valley of Oaxaca, not in the isthmus of Juchitán where scholars have noted the prevalence of matriarchal systems. See Ramona Pérez, "Fiesta as Tradition, Fiestas as Change: Ritual, Alcohol and Violence in a Mexican Community," *Addiction* (95:3): 365-373 for discussions of binge drinking at Catholic fiestas as a behavior linked to domestic violence.

[32] For comparisons with other indigenous rights movements, see *Contemporary Indigenous Movements in Latin America,* eds. Erick D. Langer and Elena Muñoz (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003).

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ways.[33] He argues that practicing Protestantism in Catholic Latin America is comparable to a strike or protest against the local status quo. As I demonstrate in this dissertation, Protestants, especially Pentecostals or fringe Christians, disrupt social norms; they do not drink, smoke, or dance nor do they participate in obligations such as tequio. Instead, they create new networks— often with Protestants from outside communities. Bastian asserts that these actions effectually modernize the community and dramatically change social relations. He argues that Protestantism provides dissatisfied individuals with connections to the outside while at the same time breaking down local monopolies.[34] Bastian sees conversion as a desire for transformation, and such dissidents "use religion as a vehicle to change unequal social, economic or political systems."[35] He is also adamant that Protestant growth is not a result of North American imperialism.[36] I agree with Bastian's approach; indigenous Mexicans are actively looking for changes that conversion may provide them. Converts are not simply victims of imperialism.

A growing body of literature on identity in native communities informs my understanding of the relationship between tradition and identity. While pan-indigenous identity and shared tradition are often used as a defense against Protestant incursion, indigenous identity in Mexico is historically very much a local one. In his 1969 study on inter-ethnic relations in Chiapas, anthropologist Henning Siverts noted, "Indianhood did

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[33] Jean-Pierre Bastian, *Los Disidentes: Sociedades Protestantes y Revolución en México, 1872-1911* (México, DF: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1989) and Bastian, "Disidencia religiosa en el campo mexicano," *Religión y Política en México* (San Diego: Centro de Estudios México-Estados Unidos, 1985):177-192.

[34] Bastian, "Protestantismos Latinoamericanos, 1961-1983: Entre la resistencia y la sumisión," *Conferencia General de Historia de la Iglesia en América Latina* (México, DF: CEHILA, 1984), 18.

[35] Bastian, "Protestantismos Latinoamericanos,"18.

[36] Bastian, *La mutación religiosa de América Latina* (México, DF: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1997), especially chapters three and four.

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not extend to neighboring *pueblos* or to Mexican Indians in general."[37] Concurring, historian María de Los Ángeles Romero Frizzi observes, "The majority of indigenous peoples in Oaxaca identify more closely with their village or their community than their ethnolinguistic group."[38] Anthropologist Alicia Barabas argues that normative systems of custom regulate all areas of daily collective life in Oaxacan communities, especially ritual practices.[39] Keeping such important observations in mind, I do, however, share anthropologist Kay B. Warren's warning not to mistake traditional rituals as a timeless window into the past.[40] Warren's work in western Guatemala reveals how Mayans renewed past traditions both as a response to subordination by *ladinos* and as a coping method from the extreme violence their communities endured during decades of guerilla warfare.

In a similar vein, historian Jennifer Denetdale argues that notions of pre-contact traditional gender roles are re-imagined and re-constructed to prevent women from obtaining authoritative positions in contemporary Native government.[41] This assertion is

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[37] Henning Siverts, "Ethnic Stability and Boundary Dynamics in Southern Mexico," *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference,* ed. Fredrik Barth (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 1998), 115.

[38]María de los Ángeles Romero Frizzi, "The Indigenous Population of Oaxaca from the Sixteenth Century to the Present," in eds. Richard E. Adams and Murdo J. MacLeod, *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas,* Volume II, Part II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 302.

[39] Alicia Barabas, "Los sistemas normativos frente a las nuevas alternativas religiosas en Oaxaca," in Barabas and Miguel Bartolomé eds., *Dinámicas culturales: Religiones y migración en Oaxaca* (Oaxaca City: Centro INAH, 2010), 99-174.

[40] Kay B. Warren's study of Pan-Mayan revitalization movements in Guatemala recognizes that "revitalization is a process of political articulation and cultural hybridizing, not inevitably a nostalgic escape to the past," Warren, "Indigenous Movements as a Challenge to the Unified Social Movement Paradigm for Guatemala," in *Cultures of Politics, Politics of Cultures,* eds. Sonia E. Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 171. See also Warren's study, *Indigenous Movements and Their Critics* (Princeton University Press, 1998) and Warren, *The Symbolism of Subordination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989).

[41] Jennifer Denetdale, "Securing the Navajo National Boundaries: War, Patriotism, Tradition, and the Diné Marriage Act of 2005," *Wicazo Sa Review* 24:2 (Fall 2009): 131-148. See also Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007).

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useful in my conceptualization of indigenous identity as a historical process that is constantly changing rather than a fixed category. Identity is negotiated in interactions with state, religious, and foreign entities.[42] This study demonstrates how Indigenous rights' movements organized their demands for autonomy and self-determination as a way to contest the presence of Protestant missionaries in their communities. Specifically, I show in Chapter Four, how expelling the SIL became a rallying point for rights and contributed to the ongoing construction of indigenous identity.

Given Oaxaca's rank as the state with the largest number of indigenous migrants working in the United States, the last two decades has brought an explosion of scholarship on Oaxacan migration with anthropologists leading the way. This important work contributes to my understanding of how and where community social and political space is organized and how ethnic identities are (re)constructed through migration. Michael Kearney, Carole Nagengast, Jonathan Fox, Lynn Stephen, and Carmen Martínez Novo have tracked indigenous Oaxacan migration to California, Washington, and Oregon while often focusing on how indigenous identities are used to frame protests for safer working conditions or improved living arrangements.[43] Most recent works on religion

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[42] See Les W. Field "Who are the Indians? Reconceptualizing Indigenous Identity, Resistance, and the Role of Social Science in Latin America," in *Latin America Research Review* 29:3 (1994): 237-248, for an excellent synthesis of the different schools of thought on defining Indigenous identity.

[43] Jonathan Fox and Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, eds., *Indigenous Migrants in the United States* (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 2004); Michael Kearney, "The Effects of Transnational Culture, Economy, and Migration on Mixtec Identity in Oaxacalifornia," in *The Bubbling Cauldron: Race Ethnicity, and the Urban Crisis,* edited by Michael Peter Smith and Joe R. Feagin, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press),226-243; Carmen Martínez Novo, *Who Defines Indigenous? Identities, Development, Intellectuals, and the State in Northern Mexico* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006) and Lynn Stephen, *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

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concentrate on the impact of migration on patron saint day *mayordomías*.[44] Studies on rural indigenous Mexico tend to focus on the vibrant Catholic *fiesta* systems with little acknowledgement of Protestant growth throughout southern Mexico.

Contested Spaces

Transnational migration literature has influenced my conceptualization of Protestantism as a transformed social space where indigenous identities are negotiated and at times reconfigured. Geographer Alison Mountz's ground-breaking research on Zapotec migration to Poughkeepsie, New York, adapted David Harvey's theory on time-space compression to theorize a new third zone labeled Oaxaca-Poughkeepsie (OP).[45] It was within this space that Zapotecs remained participants in San Augustín Yatareni's strict civil-religious hierarchy by returning home to fulfill cargo obligations or sending funds in lieu of service. I see Protestantism as a new, transformed space for indigenous Oaxacans where they straddle multiple and, at times, conflicting identities. As I will show in this dissertation, converting to Protestantism is not always antithetical to indigenous culture(s).

Similarly, anthropologist Michael Kearney argued that migration to southern California helped strengthen and reaffirm indigenous identity. In Kearney's conceptualization of "Oaxacalifornia," indigenous migrants replicate home community systems of governance and reciprocal exchange. Kearney posits, "Although migration from Oaxaca erodes many aspects of traditional local identities, at the same time it is

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[44] See Toomas Gross, "Farewell to Fiestas and Saints? Changing Catholic Practices in Contemporary Rural Oaxaca," *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* 3:1 (2009) for an argument that the fiesta system in Oaxaca is actually growing in symbolic and physical importance due to the rise of Protestant churches.

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creating and reinforcing other expressions of ethnicity and regionalism, which are visible in the many Oaxacan organizations and associations that have been formed in the north."[46] In contrast, in her study on Mixtec laborers in Baja California, Carmen Martínez Novo argues that the agendas of indigenous community leaders are interpreted as grassroots in nature when in fact they often advance the Mexican state's agenda. Martínez Novo suggests that Mixtec migrants more frequently respond to racism by rejecting collective identities and focusing on social mobility and economic integration through assimilation into mainstream mestizo life along the border.[47] I agree with Kearney in that once in a new often hostile space, indigenous Oaxacans might unite under a shared ethnic identity and seek to reinforce and strengthen common practices and traditions. Yet I also consider Martínez Novo's premise that the state often co-opts indigenous leaders; in Oaxaca the legalization of customary law in 1995 was widely heralded by indigenous rights' activists as an important affirmation of autonomy. However, I find that the state government pushed for its legalization to curb opposition parties like the Party of the Revolution (PRD) from campaigning in traditionally Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) voting territory.

My conceptualization of the social spaces that Protestantism ruptures, negotiates, and/or creates is influenced by Benedict Anderson's much cited but still readily applicable paradigm on "imagined communities." Anderson's work is focused on the

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[45] Alison Mountz, "Daily Life in the Transnational Migrant Community of San Augustín Yatareni and Poughkeepsie, New York," Diaspora 5: 3 (Winter 1996):403-128. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1988).

[46] Michael Kearney and Federico Besserer, "Oaxacan Municipal Governance in Transnational Context," in eds. Jonathan Fox and Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States* (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 2004), 459.

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development of nationalism so his treatment of Latin America is understandably limited to nineteenth century nation building. However, his discussion of twentieth century Latin American governments' celebration of their indigenous past while trying desperately to assimilate and modernize contemporary indigenous populations is applicable to my study. "This reversed ventriloquism helped to open the way for a self-conscious *indigenismo*…Mexicans speaking in Spanish 'for' pre-Columbian 'Indian' civilizations whose languages they do not understand."[48] In the post-revolutionary period until the 1970s, the Mexican state saw acquisition of Spanish and assimilation as the only option for indigenous Mexicans. Protestant converts break from reciprocal societal ties and forge a community not limited to a local village identity but to a larger Christian one that united Protestants with indigenous peoples from other areas of Mexico and the United States, hence forging a transnational identity. Although Anderson's study is based on the forging of identities within the nation-state, I also see Protestantism as an "imagined community" that spans what Michael Kearney refers to as "transnational spaces."[49]

It is in this "imagined community" where Protestants, especially Pentecostals, "are celebrating their very own fiesta."[50] This community is not regulated by the Catholic Church and, in fact, challenges community norms and communal adhesion; it breaks Protestants from the binds of their local communities and propels them into a larger,

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[47] Carmen Martínez Novo, *Who Defines Indigenous?* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 116.

[48] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 198-199.

[49] Michael Kearney, "Transnational Oaxacan Indigenous Identity: The Case of Mixtecs and Zapotecs," *Identities* 7:2, 175.

[50] David Martin, as quoted in Garrard-Burnett and Stoll, eds., *Rethinking Protestantism in Latin America,* 285.

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national, transnational, and international arena. Through preservation of pre-Hispanic and colonial era rituals, indigenous Oaxacans maintain an intimate connection to ancestors, one that cannot be separated from folk Catholicism. Protestants may identify with this strong connection to language and culture but argue that they are in many ways reinforcing, not shattering, indigenous identity by converting to Protestantism.

Anthropologist Lynn Stephen has posited that "past identities and meanings" play an important role in how contemporary Zapotec and Mixtec ethnic identity is constructed. Stephen asserts that indigenous identities are most strongly articulated in situations of conflict or competition.[51] From my perspective, competing notions of indigenous ethnic identity emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a form of self-defense against religious conflict and competition in communities experiencing rapid social transformation. In their denunciation of the SIL, social scientists and indigenous leaders in Oaxaca based their criticism of Protestantism on the premise that it threatened the core of indigenous identity: tequio and the cargo system, two essential components of local social organization and governance. I am not implying that Oaxacan communities are what anthropologist Eric R. Wolf once described as "closed, corporate communities."[52] Rather, I am influenced by historian Eric Hobsbawm's conceptualization of tradition: "The past, real or invented…gives any desired change (or resistance to innovation) the sanction of precedent, social continuity and natural law as expressed in history."[53] I build on Hobsbawm's assertion about tradition and Stephen's conceptualization of identity to

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[51] See Lynn Stephen, "The Creation and Re-Creation of Ethnicity: Lessons from the Zapotec and Mixtec of Oaxaca," in *Latin American Perspectives* 23:2 (Spring 1996): 18, 33.

[52] Eric R. Wolf, "Closed Corporate Peasant Communities in Mesoamerica and Central Java," in *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, 13:1 (spring, 1957), 1-18.

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suggest that identities can be re-imagined and at times reinvented altogether as a response to change or to shifting relations of power. For indigenous Catholics, the incursion of Protestantism into their communities drastically altered social organization and communal rituals.

Helping to develop my understanding of how religion impacts local social organization, I also draw on anthropologist Ronald Loewe's argument that Catholic syncretic religious practices contribute to "hierarchy and the maintenance of invidious distinctions between groups."[54] As I demonstrate in this dissertation, Protestantism breaks down social hierarchies and encourages ordinary community members to lead a Bible study or build a church. Mechanisms that keep a community running, such as tequio and cargo, are disrupted by Protestant conversion.

Sources and Methodology

This study contributes new insights into the complex relationship between popular worship, ethnic identity, and social movements in Mexico. Using a combination of field interviews, North American missionary literature, pastoral letters, petitions, and religious conflict cases documented in Oaxaca's state and local archives, my dissertation is the first major historical study to focus primarily on Protestantism in rural Oaxaca and its impact on indigenous identities. My source base includes institutional and non-institutional missionary literature, some by Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist mission boards, along with other more personal accounts written by husband-wife teams when they returned to the United States.

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[53] Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, *Invented Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 2-3.

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At the University of Texas's Benson Latin American Collection library, I consulted microfilm of *El Atalaya Bautista,* a bi-monthly Baptist bulletin published jointly in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez between 1908 and 1930. I also consulted digitalized collections from the Methodist Church's *The Gospel in all Lands* and the Presbyterian Church's *El Nuevo Faro* and the *Presbyterian Journal.* The bulk of the conflict cases that I cite including handwritten letters, petitions, and photographs are from Oaxaca's *Archivo General del Poder Ejecutivo del Estado de Oaxaca* (AGEPEO), but some of the court case transcripts are also from the *Archivo General del Poder Judicial del Estado de Oaxaca* (APJO). For the Catholic Church's perspective on Protestant growth, I visited the *Archivo Histórico de la Arquiodiócesis de Oaxaca* mostly for the monthly *Revista Oficial* that tracked pastoral visits to indigenous communities and included local and national stories warning of the dangers of unchecked Protestant growth.

The SIL's Jaime Torres Bodet Library in Mitla houses an array of New Testament translations, samples of indigenous children's text books published jointly with the Ministry of Education, and yearly reports (albeit spotty) of the SIL's activities in Mexico. In addition, there is also a treasure trove of manuals for missionaries on everything from cultural etiquette during meal times to recommendation on how to handle accusations of cultural imperialism or espionage. My SIL sources include several works detailing the life of SIL founder Cameron Townsend including some designed as missionary adventure tales for evangelical children audiences. The SIL had an impressive network of media connections that extended beyond religious presses. In addition to glossy recruitment

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[54] Loewe, *Maya or Mestizo,* 146.

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publications, I also found useful references to the SIL's work in such popular U.S. publications as *Life, National Geographic* and *Reader's Digest.*

At the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (CIESAS) I was given access to the private papers of former INI director Salomón Nahmad Sittón. Anthropologist Nahmad Sittón was heavily involved in the 1979 joint INI-SEP investigation that severed the SIL's publishing contracts with the Ministry of Education. Finally, through consulting newspaper repositories in Oaxaca City and Mexico City, I gained insight into the role of national evangelical defense movements in publicizing indigenous religious conflicts in the national press.

Through this study, I emphasize indigenous perspectives not always visible in the historical record. Through my conversations with Zapotec, Mixe, Mixtec, and Chatino Protestant converts; bilingual education promoters; and local authorities and pastors, I gained insight into how Protestant growth impacted local social organization. These interviews lasted between thirty minutes and two hours, and they sometimes continued across multiple visits. They usually occurred after a Sunday service gathering, wedding, or Bible study meeting. At the same time, I do engage in what anthropologist Laura Nader referred to in her 1969 work on Zapotec structure of justice as "studying up." I analyze powerful institutions, such as a foreign missionary organization or the state government, in order to understand how they engage with and interpret indigenous peoples.[55]

History-making, according to oral history theorist Lynn Abrams, "is the product of a struggle for dominance of a particular interpretation of an event or period. And when

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a hegemonic view emerges it generally excludes or mutes alternative or counter interpretations."[56] In the last decade, historians Florenica Mallon's and Daniel James's ground breaking inclusion of oral histories in their work on Mapuche activism and Argentine unionism, respectively, changed the way social and ethnohistorians conduct research.[57] In the oral histories in Chapter Two, I use Protestant memories in Tlacochahuaya toward the formation of a collective memory, a social memory, and a collective identity. As folklorist Katherine Borland eloquently explains, historians identify

> chunks of artful talk within this flow of conversation, give them physical existence (most often through writing), and embed them in a new context of expressive or at least communicative activity (usually the scholarly article aimed towards an audience of professional peers). Thus, we construct a second level narrative based upon, but at the same time reshaping, the first.[58]

Borland's conceptualization of oral history influenced how I analyzed individuals' memories and narratives of local conflicts.

This dissertation is divided into six chapters, including this introduction. Chapter Two examines the themes of post-revolutionary religious violence in the Central Valley. I demonstrate how Baptists constructed a new type of martyr—one who is indigenous, Protestant, and patriotic and different from the overarching Catholic narratives. In

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[55] Laura Nader, "Up the Anthropologist: Perspectives Gained from Studying Up," in *Reinventing Anthropology* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1969) as cited in Martínez Novo, *Who Defines Indigenous*, 13.

[56] Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 97.

[57] Daniel James, *Doña María's Story: Life History, Memory, and Political Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001). Florencia Mallon, *Courage Tastes of Blood: The Mapuche Community of Nicolás Ailío and the Chilean State, 1906-2001* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). Rosa Isolde Reuque Paillalef and Mallon, *When a Flower was Reborn: The Life and Times of a Mapuche Feminist* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

[58] Katherine Borland, "That's Not What I Said: Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research," in *The Oral History Reader*, Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., (New York: Routledge, 1998), 321.

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Chapter Two, I also probe the much-neglected role of Protestant women in bringing the Revolution to the countryside. How did Protestant women negotiate revolutionary citizenship? How is the *mestizo/indígena* relationship also a gendered one for Protestants?

Chapter Three highlights the effectiveness of Evangelical Defense movements in enforcing constitutional law over local customary law. Article 24 of the 1917 Mexican Constitution guaranteed freedom of religion but local authorities argued that community adhesion and ancient tradition trumped ephemeral laws written on paper. Chapter Four analyzes the controversial role of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in indigenous communities of Oaxaca. It traces the SIL's influence on indigenous rights' movements and language revitalization. Chapter Five explores the impact of the newer Protestant groups in Oaxaca. I examine how migration, the increasing presence of Pentecostal and fringe Christian denominations, and liberation theology in Oaxaca impacted social organization and local identity in indigenous communities. It also discusses the growing popularity of the Internet to record examples of religious intolerance in Oaxaca. In Chapter Five's epilogue, I provide an analysis of the controversial 2008 Luis Palau "Good Music and Good News" evangelization crusade in Oaxaca City. The Conclusion offers a discussion of Protestantism's impact on the contested nature of political, sacred, and social spaces in Oaxaca.

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Chapter Two: "La sangre está clamando justicia:" Baptists in Oaxaca

"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."[59]
— Tertullian of Carthage, "To the Martyrs," 197 CE

Martyrdom is an enduring theme in the history of Christianity. A martyr, or "witness," endures persecution and dies for his or her beliefs; Christ's death and resurrection is the cornerstone of the faith.[60] Christians threatened the political, religious, and social order of the early Roman Empire. To limit their influence, the government outlawed Christianity, frequently blaming Christians for precipitating natural disasters.[61] As the ancient theologian Tertullian famously observed in 197 CE, "If the Tiber overflows or the Nile does not, the cry goes up: 'Christians to the lion.'"[62] Despite persecution, Christianity spread and became the Empire's official religion by the fourth century.

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[59] Tertullian of Carthage, "To the Martyrs," in eds. William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint, *Christian Apologetics, Past and Present* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009), 311.

[60] "Martyr" comes from the Greek word for "witness." See Richard P. McBrian, *Catholicism* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), 1022-1023, for a discussion of early Christian martyrs.

[61] The apostle Paul was executed in 64 CE after Emperor Nero blamed Christians for the Great Fire in Rome.

[62] Tertullian of Carthage, *Tertullian: Apology* (Harvard University Press, 1931), 183.

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Catholicism bases its organizational structure on the premise that the apostle Peter was the first bishop of Rome; the Pope emulates Peter's position as head of the Church.[63] Reformers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries challenged this and other interpretations of Biblical Scripture—Martin Luther's 95 Theses in 1517 being one widely cited example—resulting in the Protestant Reformation. As new Protestant competition emerged, including Lutheranism and Calvinism, the Catholic Church responded with a Counter-Reformation of its own, resulting in brutal civil wars between Catholics and Protestants throughout much of sixteenth century Europe.[64]

Centuries later, the stories of Reformation era martyrs influenced Protestant missionaries as they evangelized Catholic Latin America. Protestant missionaries used terms like fanatical and Romanish to describe what they interpreted as overly zealous Catholic parishioners or regions. As an example, in 1922, Presbyterian missionary W. Reginald Wheeler remarked that, despite the physical and verbal attacks his missionary team endured from Catholic Oaxacans, "Our workers have not ceased to visit the Mixteca. The blood of martyrs has bought it for Christ. Probably Rome will take more lives before religious toleration and an open Bible becomes the rules in these mountains; but we go forward."[65] In this same report on Presbyterian missionary sites in Oaxaca, Wheeler included a picture of a Zapotec man driving an oxen team fastened to the cart by "Roman Yoke." The photograph's caption stated that the cart's cross-piece resembled

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[63] Mathew 16:18 "And I say also onto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

[64] For the seminal publication in the genre of historic Protestant martyrdom, see John Foxe's 1550 work, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs: A History of the Lives, Sufferings, and Deaths of the Early Christian and Protestant Martyrs* (Bridge-Logos, Revised edition: 2001). After the Bible, Foxe's work was the most widely read book by Protestants in the sixteenth century.

[65] W. Reginald Wheeler, *Modern Missions in Mexico* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1925), 29.

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those "employed in Palestine in the time of Christ" as if to solidify his observation that indigenous Mexicans were literally and figuratively repressed by the Roman Catholic Church.[66] Protestant missionaries sought to spread the Gospel and modernize indigenous communities, which they believed were trapped in the ancient past.

These references to Rome, Catholicism, and Protestant persecution became more apparent with increased evangelization efforts in the region following the triumph of the 1910 Revolution. Protestant missionaries saw themselves as introducing to indigenous Mexicans for the first time a true Christianity uncorrupted by Roman Catholicism. By focusing on a failed Baptist missionary project in a Zapotec community in the Central Valley, this chapter illustrates how post-revolutionary Protestants compared the struggles they faced in predominantly Catholic Mexico to the persecution of early Christians and early Protestants. Even though the Mexican Revolution officially ended in 1920, the post-revolutionary period ushered in a period of sustained religious violence in much of Mexico. While the 1926-1929 Catholic *Cristero* rebellion against the Federal Government is the central narrative of twentieth century Mexican martyrdom, Protestant Mexicans also died for their religious beliefs.

As the pioneer Zapotec missionary for the Convención Bautista Nacional de México (CBNM/National Baptist Convention of Mexico), Samuel Juárez García established the Baptists' original congregation in southern Mexico.[67] In a June 1923 letter

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[66] Wheeler, *Modern Missions in Mexico,* 22-23.

[67] Founded in 1903, the National Baptist Convention of Mexico was financially supported by Northern and Southern Baptist boards of the United States. See Margaret Rudd, *A Practical Mystic: A.B. Rudd* (Annandale, Virginia: Charles Baptie Studios, 1987), for a detailed analysis of Northern and Southern board agendas in Mexico. See also Justice C. Anderson, *An Evangelical Saga: Baptists and their Precursors in Latin America* (Xulon Press, 2005), 115-117, for an analysis of the CNBC's transition from foreign missionary organization to national Mexican organization in 1939.

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to his superiors in the CBNM, Juárez García complained that superstition and intolerance from local Catholics jeopardized his missionary program in Tlacochahuaya, Oaxaca.

> This town is very fanatical, and it has cost us much work to maintain our mission here. The scarcity of rains was blamed on us, and it is up to three times now that fanatics have tried to expel us from here. If they have not done it yet, it is because now we have a good number of believers. They all fear that there will be friction between Evangelicals and Romans here.[68]

Echoing the complaints of early Christians Juárez García claimed that villagers irrationally blamed the drought on the Baptists.[69] Catholics murdered Juárez García in 1935 and his former

followers designated him the first indigenous Baptist martyr in Mexico.

Based upon Juárez García's history, this chapter investigates Protestantism's impact on conceptualizations of indigenous identities, nationalism, and the construction of Protestant martyrdom in post-revolutionary Mexico. My analysis of this contentious Baptist project in the Central Valley of Oaxaca illustrates the intersection of missionary and revolutionary agendas with contrasting conceptualizations of ethnic and regional identities. Although members of the National Baptist Convention felt a Christian obligation to support indigenous converts, they saw Zapotec culture as a frustrating obstacle in attaining a dual (and at times competing) Mexican/Christian identity. Local conflicts in the Central Valley community of Tlacochahuaya led to alternate martyrdom narratives that speak to the larger religious conflicts in indigenous Mexico but prioritize

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[68] Samuel Juárez García, *El Atalaya Bautista,* August 2,1923. Original Spanish: "Este pueblo es muy fanático y por lo mismo nos ha costado mucho trabajo sostener nuestra misión. La escasez de las lluvias se atribuye a nosotros y van tres veces que los fanáticos pretenden desterrarnos. Si no lo han hecho se ha debido a que ahora tenemos un buen número de creyentes. Temen que haya fricción entre evangélicos y romanos." All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

[69] For the seminal publication in the genre of historic Christian martyrdom, see John Foxe's 1563 work, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs: A History of the Lives, Sufferings, and Deaths of the Early Christian and Protestant Martyrs* (Bridge-Logos, Revised edition: 2001).

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Protestant, not the dominant Catholic, histories of martyrdom.[70] This martyrdom connects Protestants to nationalism and patriotic heroes. By examining an oral history of martyrdom, I trace a community's *construction* as well as its *contestation of* collective memory.[71] Primarily a local history of one Baptist congregation, these events and experiences are representative of a larger pattern of religious conflict in Oaxaca. However, what makes Tlacochahuaya particularly important is that, unlike many of the first Protestant missionaries in Oaxaca, Juárez García was Zapotec himself, which provides an intimate look at the interworking of a new belief system in a centuries-old village.

Early Protestantism in Oaxaca

Protestant missionaries believed it was their spiritual duty to lead Mexicans away from the yoke of the Catholic Church. Bolstered by Mexico's 1857-1860 Constitutional reforms that officially declared the separation of Church and State, North American Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian missionaries established small private schools and Bible study classes along the Mexican border in the late nineteenth century.[72] Presbyterian missionary Melinda Rankin founded Mexico's first permanent Protestant mission site in Monterrey, "the very heart of Popery," due to its high ratio of Catholic churches to parishioners. In her 1875 memoir, *Twenty Years among the Mexicans,*

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[70] During the 1926-1929 *Cristiada* rebellion, 90,000 Mexicans lost their lives. In 2000, Pope John Paul II canonized 25 Mexican priests as martyrs for dying for the Catholic faith.

[71] See Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 78-105 for her discussion on the oral historian's use of memory as a source.

[72] The 1857 Liberal Constitution limited Catholic Church landholdings, clerical privileges, and legalized Protestantism. See Edwin Bliss, *A Concise History of Missions* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1897*),*99-109, for background of U.S. missionary organizations in late nineteenth century Latin America. See Monica Orozco, "Not to be Called Christians," in Lee M. Penyak ed., *Religion and Society in Latin America,* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2007), 175-189, for U.S. Protestant missionaries' perceptions of Catholicism in Mexico.

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Rankin challenged other Protestants to evangelize Mexico: "Christ is bidding us take that land for Him, and shall we hesitate to go forward, even at the risk of life, in a battle which our glorious Captain has waged against papal arrogance and usurpation?"[73] Rankin encouraged young Protestants to "take up the fallen banner of the lamented Stephen" and continue bringing the Gospel to indigenous communities.[74] With her reference to Stephen, the proto-martyr of Christianity, Rankin reminded her readers that, "Martyrdom oftentimes bears precious fruit," affirming that the Christian Church only grew stronger with each wave of persecution.[75]

Protestant missionaries increasingly held the Catholic Church accountable for violence against Mexican Protestants. Thomas Westrup of the American Bible Society established the *Primera Iglesia Bautista de Monterrey* (First Baptist Church of Monterrey) in 1864. Westrup's brother, missionary John Westrup, was murdered in 1880 while setting up a congregation in the northern state of Coahuila. Mexican Baptist Convention President Alejandro Treviño Osuna accused "fanáticos romanistas" of the missionary's murder although an official investigation was never conducted. Treviño argued that Westrup's unjust killing was the blood that formed the first Baptist Church in Mexico.[76] Protestant martyrdom is a recurring theme throughout the post-revolutionary

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[73] Melinda Rankin, *Twenty Years among the Mexicans: A Narrative of Missionary Labor* (Cincinnati: Central Book Concern, 1881), 213-214.

[74] See *Acts of the Apostles*, 7:59-60, for the death of first Christian deacon Stephen in 35 AD. "And they stoned Stephen, invoking and saying: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And falling on his knees, he cried with a loud voice, saying: Lord, lay not this sin to their charge: And when he had said this, he fell asleep in the Lord."

[75] Rankin, *Twenty Years among the Mexicans,* 198-199.

[76] AlejandroTreviño Osuna, *Historia de los trabajos Bautistas en México* (El Paso: Casa Bautista de Publicaciones, 1939), 32. Original Spanish: "Las autoridades de ese tiempo no se empeñaban en investigar quienes mataban a los protestantes. Algunos afirmaban que fueron indios procedentes de Nuevo México, mientras otros dijeron, y esto es lo más probable, que fueron fanáticos romanistas que creyeron de este modo servir a su iglesia, como muchas veces lo habían hecho otros."

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period as missionaries saw themselves as introducing Christianity for the first time to Mexicans, accompanied by violence and persecution.

Earlier Protestant missionaries expressed horror upon observing Oaxacans praying to the saints or the Virgin Mary to intercede in times of distress. Methodist missionary Lucius C. Smith, in his first visit to San Juan Quiotepec, a Chinantec-speaking town in the district of Ixtlán de Juárez, observed that, despite being Catholic, the Chiantecs appeared to have little exposure to the Gospel. There was not a priest living in the community, but there was a large chapel with what his host described as "a very miraculous image of Saint James." Smith lamented that the villagers prayed "to that lifeless image" instead of God.[77] Prayer candles, a home altar with images of saints, and alcohol are all components of folk Catholicism that distressed the National Baptist Convention members as much as it had distressed Smith in the 1890s.[78] This missionary organization entered Oaxaca with the fierce determination to bring Christianity and the tenets of the Mexican Revolution to indigenous southern Mexico. Radical post-revolutionary legislation gave missionaries the opening for which they had long awaited.

Agrarianism, nationalism, and anticlericalism were at the heart of the 1917 Mexican Constitution. The document laid out the nation's bold new relationship with the Catholic Church, *hacendados* (large land holders), and foreign companies. The revolutionary government sought to unite Mexico through an emphasis on civic

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[77] Lucius C. Smith, "A Tour in the State of Oaxaca, Mexico," Eugene R. Smith, ed., *The Gospel in all Lands* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1892), 392.

[78] See John Beekman, "Minimizing Religious Syncretism among the Chols," in *Practical Anthropology* 6:6 (1959): 241-250, for advice given to evangelical missionaries in how to advise new converts to abstain from drinking, displaying images of Catholic saints in their homes, and burning candles during worship. For a good discussion of the origins of 'popular' or 'folk' Mexican Catholicism', see Martin Austin Nesvig ed., *Local Religion in Colonial Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006).

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education and allegiance to the state, not to the Roman Catholic Church. Article 3 of the Constitution called for secular education in schools. Article 5 outlawed monastic religious orders such as Franciscans, Augustinians, and Dominicans. Article 24 forbade *culto* (worship) outside of *templos* (church buildings) effectively outlawing holy day processions and saint's day fiestas for Catholics.[79] Article 27 prohibited religious associations from privately owning real estate or their own church buildings. Finally, Article 130 limited the Catholic Church's public and legal influence, restricted clergy from wearing habits in public, and prohibited them from voting or criticizing Mexican legislation or political issues in the media. Article 130 also gave state governments the authority to regulate clergy activity and clergy ratios per region.[80]

Although President Alvaro Obregón (1920-1924) only superficially implemented the aforementioned articles, President Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-1928) sought to create a new Revolutionary civil religion.[81] In July 1926, he issued a decree, "the Calles Law," that strengthened the Constitution's anticlerical provisions by enforcing financial and legal penalties against clergy who wore religious garb in public or criticized the government. Calles asserted that Mexico's only option for the future was to be secular and progressive, not reactionary and fanatical. Calles declared: "drought must be

[79] Original Article 24 in the Mexican Constitution of 1917: "Everyone is free to embrace the religion of his choice and to practice all ceremonies, devotions, or observances of his respective faith, either in places of public worship or at home, provided they do not constitute an offense punishable by law. Every religious act of public worship must be performed strictly inside places of public worship, which shall at all times be under governmental supervision."

[80] Adrian Bantjes, "The Regional Dynamics of Anticlericalism," in Mathew Butler, ed., *Faith and Impiety in Revolutionary Mexico* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 112.

[81] Bantjes, "Idolatry and Iconoclasm in Revolutionary Mexico: The De-Christianization Campaigns, 1929-1940," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 13:1 (Winter: 1997): 88.

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countered by prudent public works, not parading saints around parched fields."[82] In reaction to the "Calles Law," the Mexican national episcopate voted to go on strike and suspend all masses and sacraments beginning on July 31, 1926.[83] In defense of the Church, Catholic peasants shouted "*¡Viva Cristo Rey!"* (Long live Christ the King!) and fought the federal army in a three year civil war. 90,000 Mexican soldiers, *cristeros,* and civilians lost their lives during the *Cristiada* rebellion.[84] U.S. ambassador Dwight Morrow mediated a compromise between the Church and the State in 1929, but religious violence stemming from the anti-clerical Constitution continued well into the 1930s. In 2000, Pope John Paul II canonized as martyrs twenty-five Catholic priests who were executed during the Cristiada for their commitment to religious freedom in Mexico.[85]

In contrast to Catholic clergy, Protestant missionaries adeptly couched their religious agendas in revolutionary language. By sharing the post-revolutionary government's desire to bring literacy, improved healthcare, and sobriety to indigenous communities, missionaries had much in common with civil servants and schoolteachers,

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[82] Plutarco Elías Calles, as quoted in Alan Knight, "Revolutionary Anticlericalism," *Faith and Impiety in Revolutionary Mexico,* 30.

[83] "Therefore, confronting the impossibility of practicing our sacred ministry under the conditions imposed by this decree, and, after having consulted the Most Holy Father, His Holiness the Pope, and with his ratification, we order that after July 31, until we order otherwise, all religious services requiring the intervention of priests shall be suspended in all the churches of the country...We advise you, beloved sons, that this is not meant to impose on you the grave penalty of interdiction, but we merely intend to use the only weapon at present at our disposal to protest against the anti-religious clauses of the Constitution and the laws hereby sanctioned." "Text of Pastoral Letter from Mexican Episcopate," *New York Times,* July 26, 1926.

[84] For the foundational work on the *cristiada,* see historian Jean Meyer's *The Cristero Rebellion: The Mexican People between Church and State, 1926*-1929 (Cambridge University Press, 2008). See also Meyer, *El conflicto religioso en Oaxaca, 1926-1938* (Oaxaca de Juárez: CIESAS, 2006), for a regional example of *cristero* and post-*cristero* violence in Oaxaca.

[85] Knights of Columbus, "Martyrs of Christ the King Reliquary Present at Papal Mass in Mexico," *Columbia* 92:5 (May 2012): 7.

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the vanguards of "misiones culturales."[86] Much of their missionary literature called for the "defanaticization" (reduction of Catholicism's influence in Mexico) of the indigenous population through literacy and apprenticeship training.[87] Furthermore, the major leaders of the Revolution and some cabinet members were Protestant or had attended Protestant schools.[88] For Protestant missionaries, the tightening of Catholic privileges in Mexico meant that they were given opportunities to penetrate previously Catholic zones of indigenous Mexico if they paired their religious agendas with state educational and modernization goals. If indigenous people could read the Bible for themselves, they might reduce their dependence on local priests and rituals and, hence, more quickly assimilate into the fabric of the mestizo nation. Later Protestant organizations worked closely with the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP/Ministry of Public Education) and the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI/National Indigenist Institute) to produce bilingual textbooks designed to incorporate indigenous communities into modern capitalist society.

Not until the post-revolutionary period did the Protestant evangelization of indigenous communities become a permanent fixture in Benito Juárez's home state of southeastern Oaxaca. While missionaries like Rankin in the late nineteenth century spoke of Protestant duties to conquer Mexico spiritually, post-revolutionary North American

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[86] See Blanca Garduño, *Misiones Culturales: los años utópicos, 1920-1938* (México, DF: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1999) for the political and educational ideologies behind the "crusades against ignorance."

[87] As Bantjes argues, "Revolutionary ideologues attacked Catholicism with political, socioeconomic, scientific, and historical arguments. The political elite of the 1930s believed that the Mexican Revolution was a struggle for both the economic or material emancipation and the spiritual liberation of the Mexican masses," in "Idolatry and Iconoclasm in Revolutionary Mexico*," Faith and Impiety in Revolutionary Mexico,* 93.

[88] For example: Congregationalist revolutionary leader Pascual Orozco, Jr., Baptist Senator Jonás García, and Ministry of Education Director Presbyterian Moisés Sáenz. See Baldwin, *Protestants and the Mexican Revolution,* 132-142, for a more detailed description of Protestant Mexicans in Revolutionary and post-revolutionary positions of importance.

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missionaries took a more cautious approach. U.S. missionary organizations perceptively understood the strength of Mexican nationalism following the 1910 Revolution. Mission leaders particularly hoped for Mexican men and women to be the face of evangelization.

Baptist missionaries showed acute awareness of supporting Mexican nationalism following the Revolution. Baptist Church General Missionary to Mexico A.B. Rudd stated in 1917 that, "Mexicans, rather than North Americans, must evangelize this country. Our work is to prepare the men for this work. God help me to do this and keep the way open for us!"[89] Rudd, like many North American Protestants, worried that missionaries could lose their influence if they got on the wrong side of the government. He founded a seminary in Saltillo in 1917 specifically for training indigenous Mexicans to proselytize in their home communities. The missionary adamantly warned that foreign missionaries should not preach from the pulpit; when invited, he gave sermons from his seated pew as a regular member, not as a leader.[90] This example demonstrates that the Baptist missionaries understood their vulnerable status as foreign missionaries during a time of heightened Mexican nationalism. Therefore, converting and then choosing Mexican citizens as missionaries would help strengthen their base. Thus, evangelization in indigenous communities became their primary focus.

Convención Bautista Nacional de México in Oaxaca

During the fall of 1920, the CBNM convened in Torreón, Coahuila to discuss the fate of indigenous Mexico. "What can we do to evangelize the Indians?" was the principal theme of the national meeting. CBNM President Treviño Osuna wrote in his

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[89] Rudd, *A Practical Mystic,* 96.

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memoir that the challenge created "a spirit of generosity among the attendees." For example, Sara Hale, a U.S. Baptist missionary working in northern Mexico, offered to contribute $300 annually for evangelization in indigenous communities.[91] Encouraged by Hale's offer, the CBNM pledged $1,000 more and developed a comprehensive plan for the Baptist Church's penetration into Mexico's interior.[92] To that end, Rudd discussed the potential fruitfulness of Baptist evangelization of the Tarasca in Michoacán and the Zapotec in Oaxaca and persuaded the Convention to nominate Samuel Juárez García as a missionary for the Zapotec region.[93]

Juárez García convinced the Convention that his native San Jerónimo Tlacochahuaya, a town of about 2,000 mostly monolingual Zapotec residents located twenty-one kilometers east of the capital, had a commercial market that brought residents of neighboring villages into the town each weekend and was a logical center for evangelization that would soon stretch across Oaxaca. Born in 1895 in Tlacochahuaya, Juárez García converted to Protestantism at age twelve when he accompanied his mother to Oaxaca City to sell her homemade tortillas door to door. Through his mentor and tortilla client Josué Valdez, who was a visiting Baptist pastor in Oaxaca, he earned a scholarship to study at a northern Mexican Baptist seminary and graduated in 1919.[94] In

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[90] Ibid.

[91] Treviño Osuna, *Historia de los trabajos bautistas en México*, 367.

[92] Josué G. Bautista, "Historia de las misiones Bautistas entre los Indios de México," *El Atalaya Bautista,* 7:48 December 1, 1921, 4.

[93] Juárez García first worked with General Missionary Representative Rudd under the auspices of the American Baptist Home Mission Society before signing with the Convención Nacional Bautista in October of 1920. Treviño Osuna, *Historia de los trabajos Bautistas en México,* 368-369.

[94] See Howard Benjamin Grose, ed., *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly* 31:1 (January 1909), and Fernando de la Mora Rivas, *100 Biografías de Pastores Bautistas Mexicanos* (México, D.F.: Convención

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November of 1920, arriving at the neighboring town of Abasolo's train station, twenty-five year old Juárez García marveled at the potential for his evangelization in the Zapotec region.[95] He observed that soon the Southern Mexican Railroad would connect the Central Valleys to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and Juchitán, coastal Zapotec regions hundreds of miles away where he longed to proselytize once his work in the Central Valleys had succeeded.[96]

In early correspondence with the Baptist Convention, Juárez García described his Zapotec village in the tone of a superior outsider. After all, he had a northern education, was a fluent Spanish-speaker, and was Protestant. But he also identified as an intimate member. He closed his letters warmly as "el misionero entre los Zapotecos" (the missionary among the Zapotecs). He frequently dedicated full columns of his newsletter extolling pre-Hispanic Zapotec architectural achievements such as Monte Alban and Mitla.[97] Juárez García's vacillation between paternalism toward and pride in Tlacochahuayans speaks to national but also regional interpretations of *indigenismo* and especially *Oaxaqueñismo*— celebration of Oaxaca's indigenous archeological sites,

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Nacional Bautista de México, 2004), 53-54, for brief biographical sketches of Váldez and Juárez García, respectively.

[95] Juárez García, "Entre los Zapotecos," *El Atalaya Bautista,* January 1, 1922. De la Mora Rivas, *100 Biografías de Pastores Bautistas Mexicanos,* 53-54.

[96] José Vasconcelos, Oaxaca native and the first Secretary of Public Education from 1921-1924, promised his support for a railroad connection between Oaxaca City and Tehuantepec in his presidential campaign of 1929. However, the connecting line never materialized. See Jean-Pierre Bastian, *Protestantismo y sociedad en México* (México, D.F.: Casa Unida de Publicaciones, 1983) for greater detail on the correlation between Protestant missionary work along railroad routes and mining company stations. Finally, see also Wheeler, *Modern Missions in Mexico,* 16-17, for a brief discussion of Oaxaca City's foreign (and mostly Protestant) mineworker population prior to the 1910 Revolution.

[97] Juárez García, "Entre los Zapotecos," *El Atalaya Bautista,* 106, January 1, 1922.

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regional cuisines, and colorful dress and dance.[98] Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Oaxacan government officials, schoolteachers, and civic organizations praised past indigenous accomplishments while concomitantly trying to bring the Revolution to the countryside. As historian Benjamin Smith stated, "on the one hand [indigenous Oaxacans] were treated as children or degenerates, their propensity for adult behavior reliant on exposure to modern education. On the other hand, the Indian was lauded as the vessel of important and often sophisticated folk traditions."[99] However, when it came to religion, missionaries like Juárez García saw Zapotecs as mired in Pagan-Catholic syncretic traditions that impeded their work in Tlacochahuaya. Juárez García concluded that it was the Evangelical's duty

> to awaken this race, which for centuries has been stuck in a deep lethargy. Thank God that the New Testament has begun to illuminate this dark region where Satan and Romanism has prevailed. The religion of the Zapotecs is the one that the conquerors brought: the Catholic religion with all of its gross idolatry.[100]

Juárez García argued that it was the Catholic Church's hegemonic hold on his community that was responsible for the serious challenges he faced. In an early *El Atalaya Bautista* column, Juárez García complained that as soon as he initiated regular worship services, "the local priest began his slanderous attacks on the Baptists in this town."[101] Juárez

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[98] See Deborah Poole, "An image of 'Our Indian:' Type Photographs and Racial Sentiments in Oaxaca, 1920-1940," in *Hispanic American Historical Review* 84:1 (February 2004): 37-82, for a discussion of post-revolutionary intellectual and political manipulation of Oaxaca's ethnic diversity to promote the state's interests.

[99] Benjamin T. Smith, *Pistoleros and Popular Movements: The Politics of State Formation in Postrevolutionary Oaxaca* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 49-50.

[100] Juárez García, "Informe Anual de la Junta Misionera: La obra entre los Indios," *El Atalaya Bautista,* July 15, 1921, 812. Original Spanish: "Despertar a esta raza porque centenares de años ha permanecido en profundo letargo. ¡Gracias a Dios que el Evangelio ha principiado a iluminar esta oscura región en donde Santana y el Romanísimo imperan! La religión de los zapotecas es la que trajeron los conquistadores: la religión romanista con su grosera idolatría."

[101] Juárez García, *El Atalaya Bautista,* 580, August 2, 1923. Original Spanish, "Al principiar la Misión Bautista sus trabajos, el cura del lugar parece que no nos hizo caso, pero cuando este vio que

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García responded by inviting Father Ignacio Morales to a theological debate, a common Protestant missionary technique to show off their competence in Biblical scripture.[102] According to Juárez García, "The Priest fled from the controversy and in the end, the truth [Scripture] prevailed."[103]

Juárez García repeatedly asserted that Zapotec cultural identity coupled with Catholicism made his neighbors painstakingly difficult to convert. He wrote in a 1921 missionary report: "It is not easy to convert Indians. Their ideas are so deeply ingrained that despite Reason and Scripture they offer no argument other than this is the custom of our people."[104] For Juárez García as for many Protestant missionaries and national political leaders during the Cristiada period and the nascent stage of indigenismo, Roman Catholicism was a dangerous religion for indigenous Mexico. Juárez García remarked: "Since Romanism offers its followers a wide door and a spacious path, immorality invaded this town."[105] By immorality, he principally meant foul language, idolatry, and alcoholism. He sarcastically remarked that curse words were used so frequently in

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nuestros cultos seguían muy concurridos se alarmó y entonces comenzaron sus ataques, consistiendo éstos en puras calumnias,"

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Naturalmente que hice mi defensa y al fin de todo vino a resultar una polémica por medio de correspondencia. El cura huyó de la controversia y al fin la verdad tuvo que imponerse."

[104] Juárez García, *El Atalaya Bautista,* "Entre los Zapotecos," 5-6, 21 April 1921. Original Spanish: "Sus ideas están tan arraigadas que ante la razón y ante La Escritura no presentan más argumento que este: "Así es ya la costumbre del pueblo.'"

[105] Juárez García, "Entre los Zapotecos," *El Atalaya Bautista*, 5-6. April 21, 1921. Original Spanish: "Como el romanismo ofrece a sus fieles la puerta ancha y el camino espacioso, la inmoralidad ha invadido al pueblo."

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households that children did not know the difference between proper and obscene language.[106]

Despite being a native Zapotec, Juárez García disparaged many "traditional" Zapotec customs and Catholicism. He argued that these customs were actually vestiges of colonialism. Juárez García, like other Protestant missionaries to Oaxaca, also referred to indigenous religious traditions as a form of "paganism," which mixed easily with Catholic saint worship and traditional healing practices. "The idolatry practiced by the Indian is double because he has received two forms of it: that of his race and that of Catholicism."[107] In early correspondence, he criticized Zapotec syncretic rituals that he believed misrepresented the tenets of Christianity. As an example, he described how Zapotecs in Tlacochahuaya worshiped a statue in the Church depicting Christ triumphantly riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. "There are Indians who kiss, not our savior, because he is up too high, but the donkey."[108] Horrified by Indians venerating any type of image, let alone a donkey, he also condemned their practice of worshiping Saint Anthony. "When they lose an animal or whatever little thing, they lock up Saint Anthony in a 'chiquihuite' (palm woven basket) in the middle of the patio, in the sun, or with a candle lit, and that is how they wait to find their lost item."[109] Protestant missionaries did not approve of such examples of folk Catholicism, regarding it as superstitious and a misunderstanding of Christian scripture.

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[106] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Para ellos el usar palabras torpes es muy natural y parece que no notan la diferencia entre lo bueno y lo malo."

[107] Juárez García, "Entre los Zapotecos," *El Atalaya Bautista,* March 15, 1921, 5. Original Spanish: "La idolatría en el indio es doble porque ha recibido dos clases de ella: la de su raza y la romana."

[108] Ibid.

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Like his Baptist missionary colleagues, Juárez García had little time for traditional healing or worship. Reverence for and worship of the mountains, local rivers and streams, and the cornfield plays an important role in indigenous spiritual life. As anthropologist Alicia Barabas states: "Mountains and the rivers represented the main symbol of a people and its territory; of identity and customs. In Oaxaca, the mountain is associated with the notion of fertility and abundance."[110] Juárez García viewed Mexico's indigenous population like his contemporary politicians and intellectuals who pitied Mexico's indigenous population as trapped in the colonial past.[111] If they could implement the Revolution and jettison their folk Catholicism, only then would they become truly free Mexicans.

Therefore, finding examples of paganism consumed Juárez García as he tried to distinguish which traditional practices were vestiges of Catholicism and which ones were of pre-Hispanic derivation. The missionary further described Zapotec worship of the pre-Hispanic gods as a form of paganism. He described how, when they prayed to Catholic saints, they were simultaneously worshipping the God of the Sun, of the mountain, of the river, and idols from the past. He lamented that these Gods occupied a place on the

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[109] Juárez García, "Entre los Zapotecos*," El Atalaya Bautista,* March 15, 1921, 5. Original Spanish: "Cuando se pierde una bestia o cualquiera otra cosa, encierran a San Antonio en un "chiquihuite" (canasta) en medio del patio, al sol y con una vela prendida, y así esperan recuperar lo perdido."

[110]Alicia M. Barabas, *Dones, dueños y santos: Ensayo sobre religiones en Oaxaca,* (México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2006), 71. Original Spanish: "Como hemos visto históricamente en Mesoamérica, el cerro y el agua que contiene constituyen el símbolo principal del pueblo y su territorio; de la identidad y la costumbre en el tiempo. En Oaxaca el cerro se asocia con la noción de tierra de fertilidad y abundancia, y el agua que contiene constituyen el símbolo principal del pueblo y su territorio; de la identidad y la costumbre en el tiempo."

[111] Writing at the same time Juárez García began his work in Oaxaca, renowned novelist and journalist Martin Luis Guzmán stated: "Desde entonces—desde la conquista o desde los tiempos pre-cortesianos, para el caso es lo mismo— el indio está allí, postrado y sumiso, indiferente al bien y al mal, sin conciencia, con el alma convertida en botón rudimentario, incapaz hasta de una esperanza," in "La Inconsciencia Moral del Indígena," *El Universal,* March 3, 1921.

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Roman Catholic altar where Zapotecs mixed Christian and pre-Hispanic deities. In particular, Juárez García railed against worship of images of the Virgin Mary. In Oaxaca, the devotion to the Virgin of Juquila, La Soledad, and Guadalupe, among other Virgin invocations, is perhaps the most noticeable component of folk Catholicism. It was also the part that Protestant missionaries hoped most to extinguish. Juárez García's mentor and teacher from the seminary, A.B. Rudd, perhaps best summed up Protestant aversion toward the Virgin of Guadalupe. On December 12, 1921, the feast day of the Virgin, Rudd bitterly complained in his journal about what he observed in the hilltop village of outside of Mexico City:

> La virgen de Guadalupe holds sway—and such sway! I went to La Villa and was thoroughly disgusted…dirty, filthy *pulquerías,* drinking, gambling, poverty, and this right at the doors of the great temple of '*Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe'*— all in the name of religion!! An eloquent though unintentional confession of the absolute moral insufficiency of Catholicism, or rather, I should say, of the complete separation of religion from life.[112]

Rudd viewed Catholicism as a complete anathema to "real" Christianity. Missionaries in Oaxaca spent considerable time disputing the story of the Virgin of Guadalupe's apparition on the cloak of indigenous peasant Juan Diego in 1531 at Tepeyac.[113] By undermining the credibility of the Virgin Mary's apparition in colonial Mexico, Protestants sought to sever the Virgin's prime spot in indigenous religious rituals and bring their worship back to a Christ-centered one.

Juárez García singled out *mescal* as another significant obstacle to conversion. His letters and missionary updates reveal a clear impatience with the presence of alcohol

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[112]Rudd, *A Practical Mystic,* 112.

[113]See Stafford Pool, *The Guadalupan Controversies in Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), for a survey of the major arguments disputing her miraculous apparition in 1531.

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in holiday celebrations. Juárez García criticized the evils of the traditional Oaxacan liquor in a Baptist newsletter in 1921:

> There is not a single party where numerous bottles of mescal don't appear. If it's a Catholic holiday, the mescal is the stimulant for religiosity, and if it's a patriotic holiday, it's the stimulant for patriotism. Mescal appears everywhere. There are some individuals who go on binges for two weeks straight or even whole months. And it's not just the men who practice this vice, but also the women.[114]

His primary strategy to combat this vice was to hand out pamphlets produced by the Convención Bautista condemning alcohol. Before visiting the neighboring town of San Juan del Río, renowned for its mescal factories, Juárez García and his assistants went "bien equipados" (well prepared) with copies of the popular prohibition pamphlet "Oye".[115] Yet, only one or two families in each of the six villages surrounding Tlacochahuaya accepted his literature. He remarked that the telegraph employees or the postmasters of these neighboring villages seemed most receptive to his new religious ideas.[116] For Juárez García, these individuals had accepted the progress brought by the Revolution whereas Catholics remained tied to the past.

In particular, the Zapotec missionary condemned the patron saint's day fiesta customs in most indigenous communities. He viewed it as a money drain, an excuse to get drunk, and a misrepresentation of Christianity. During the feast day of San Jeronómio, patron saint of Tlacochahuaya, all town members brought flowers to the altar before the mass started (figures 1 and 2). Afterward, a *mayordomo* (appointed *fiesta*

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[114] Juárez García, "Entre Los Zapotecas," 21 April 1921. Original Spanish: "No hay fiesta en donde no aparezcan numerosas botellas de mezcal. Si se trata de alguna fiesta católica, el mezcal es el estimulante de la religiosidad y si de fiestas patrias, aquel es el estimulante del patriotismo. En todas partes aparece el mezcal. Hay individuos que se entregan a este vicio por quince días consecutivos y hasta por meses enteros y no solamente los hombres son los viciosos, sino también las mujeres."

[115] Juárez García, *El Atalaya Bautista,* January 23, 1923. Original Spanish: "Bien equipados del popular y gráfico folletito Óye."

[116] Ibid.

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sponsor) led a procession with the saint statue, tenderly washed and dressed by women related to or appointed by the *mayordomo*, around the town square. In the late afternoon, the *mayordomo* invited residents to his home for a meal.

Figure 1. Feast Day of St. Jerome, Tlacochahuaya, September 30, 2010. Photo: Kathleen McIntyre

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Figure 2. Feast Day of St. Jerome, Tlacochahuaya, September 30, 2010. Photo: Kathleen McIntyre

Like his *mestizo* superiors in northern Mexico, instead of dwelling on Catholic fiestas, Juárez García put great effort into supporting civic holidays. However, the much-anticipated centennial celebration of Mexico's independence from Spain on September 15 and 16, 1921 was a dilemma for Protestant Mexicans. Some Protestant organizations chose not to participate in the festivities due to the traditionally celebrated narrative of the Catholic Church and its clergy as liberators. Looking to change some of the iconic symbols of the movement—such as the Virgin of Guadalupe—and put a Revolutionary spin on the Independence Movement, Baptist Senator Jonás García asked A.B. Rudd to

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form an interdenominational committee of Protestants in Mexico City to participate in the holiday.[117] Juárez García reported proudly that he and his newly converted Zapotec night school students attended the Independence Day celebrations in the nation's capital.[118] After the 1921 celebrations, which showcased more civic than Catholic symbols in the parades and aerial shows, Rudd wrote approvingly: "Rome's hold on the masses was never weaker. They are tired of papal domination, of Catholic miracles, ancient and modern, and are feeling their way to better and higher things."[119]

Juárez García received substantial Baptist support for the CNBM pioneer mission in Oaxaca.[120] The CNBM awarded Juárez García a stipend to rent a home, which also served as a classroom for Sunday school and night classes, as well as a horse to travel to the six neighboring villages in his missionary jurisdiction. By late fall of 1921, Juárez García listed approximately fifty converts who attended Bible study in his crowded home. One month he sold twenty Bibles, four times as many as his lone Baptist missionary colleague in Michoacán.[121] Ensured of his base, Juárez García's next step was to establish a permanent chapel for his members. His rental home only had a small spare room in which to conduct ceremonies and play the organ. Visitors from neighboring villages had to sleep outdoors in the town plaza if they stayed for an evening service.

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[117] According to Rudd's journal, the Protestant *velada* (evening performance) to celebrate the centennial was a great success and helped unify the 4,000 Protestants in attendance as Mexicans. Margaret Rudd notes that this was the largest public gathering of Protestants in Mexico ever. Rudd, *A Practical Mystic,* 120.

[118] "Informe Anual de la Junta Misionera," *El Atalaya Bautista,* 812, July 15, 1921.

[119] Rudd, *A Practical Mystic,* 121.

[120] Alejandro Treviño Osuna "Convención Nacional Bautista de México: Por Nuestros Campos," *El Atalaya Bautista,* 5, 1920.

[121] "Informe Anual de la Junta Misionera," *El Atalaya Bautista,* 812, July 15, 1921. Miguel Alfaro's mission with the Tarasca ran simultaneously with Juárez García's mission.

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Town authorities fined or incarcerated these followers for violating public curfew laws.[122] He also complained that his 'drunken' Catholic landlady interrupted his services and that, finally, the local priest threatened not to marry the landlady's son unless she evicted him and his followers.[123] Juárez García argued that without his own church building, his mission would never succeed. His proposed "Capilla Bautista de Tlacochahuaya" represented an opportunity to reinforce the Convención's network in southern indigenous Mexico, a project taken up by northern *mestiza* Baptist women.

La Unión Femenil and the New Chapel

As in other missionary regions, women made up a large proportion of volunteers and permanent staff.[124] Protestant women could concomitantly support the goals of the revolutionary state and curb the influence of the Roman Catholic Church by funding churches in indigenous communities. Though lacking formal electoral rights, Mexican women played a central role in bringing the tenets of the 1910 revolution to the countryside.[125] Founded in 1919, the *Unión Nacional Femenil Bautista* (Women's National Baptist Union) had over twenty-five chapters, mostly in northern and central Mexico.

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[122] Juárez García, "Informe Anual de la Junta Misionera," *El Atalaya Bautista,* 1136, and "Entre los Zapotecas," 106.

[123] Juárez García, "Capilla Bautista de Tlacochahuaya, Oaxaca," *El Atalaya Bautista* volume 30, July 29, 1926, 564.

[124] Reverend J.W. Bain, "Woman's Power in Saving the West," *Home Mission Monthly* 1 (April 1887): 126. R. Pierce Beaver, *American Protestant Women in World Mission: A History of the First Feminist Movement in North America* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1968), 13-57. See also Susan M. Yohn, *A Contest of Faiths: Missionary Women and Pluralism in the American Southwest* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), for a comparison of Presbyterian female missionaries working in Hispano-Catholic communities of northern New Mexico.

[125] Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Post-Revolutionary Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 13.

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The Women's Union perceived Catholicism in Oaxaca, "that far off region of our Republic," as a central obstacle to modernization and progress for post-revolutionary Mexico.[126] In 1922, the *Unión Femenil* launched a national campaign to raise funds for Juárez García's proposed church. Northern Protestant Esther Gutiérrez de Montes expressed such sentiments in her January 1922 *Unión Femenil* newsletter.

> It's been three months since the National Baptist Convention of Mexico has decided to work for the betterment of the Evangelical cause, in different parts of our republic, where our brothers and sisters are lacking some of the blessings we enjoy. Aren't we ready as Christian women to contribute, even if we are sacrificing, to help our brothers and sisters who are subjugated by idolatry and ignorance? Many Catholic societies are increasingly publishing false propaganda against us. Why don't we make an effort, Christian women, so that the truth may triumph?[127]

As the above example demonstrates, the *Unión Femenil* leadership body pitied indigenous Mexicans as vulnerable victims of Roman Catholic traditions. Esther G. de Montes reminded her readers of their duties as Christian women to rescue indigenous Mexicans: "I have not had the opportunity to visit the Zapotecs, but on various occasions I have visited many towns in the Valley of Mexico. Oh, how the heart saddens when it sees our indigenous class so full of absolute fanaticism. By working for our brothers and sisters less favored and less wealthy, we honor our Lord who we serve."[128] The *Unión Femenil* viewed Mexico's indigenous population as trapped in Catholic fanaticism and idolatry from the conquest period. In her subsequent fundraising columns, de Montes

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[126] *El Atalaya Bautista,* "Nuestra Capilla en Tlacochahuaya," 596, August 12, 1926.

[127] Esther G. de Montes, "Un Llamado a la Mujer Cristiana Mexicana," *El Atalaya Bautista,* January 17, 1922, 73. Original Spanish: Hace apenas tres meses que tuvo verificativo la Convención Nacional Bautista en la cual se trataron asuntos de suma importancia, así como se tomaron resoluciones tendentes al mejoramiento y ensanchamiento del trabajo Evangélico, en diferentes partes de nuestra República, donde carecen de las bendiciones, de las cuales nosotros gozamos…Muchas sociedades católicas están esforzándose en intensa propaganda de la mentira; ¿no nos esforzaremos las cristianas, por que triunfe la verdad?"

[128] *Sección de la Unión Femenil y Del Hogar* (January, 1922).

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described Zapotecs as unfortunate souls, in need of guidance from their 'wiser' (mestiza) sisters. She described witnessing indigenous women and children exhaustedly dancing the *son de tamboriles* for hours in honor of pre-Hispanic deities who they fused with Catholic saints. She challenged her readers:

> Doesn't it seem to you sisters that the time has come, that we stop this fanaticism and help our brothers and sisters who have been misled for so many years? How many sisters will take advantage of this opportunity, remembering the words of our blessed Teacher who said in Mathew 25:40—"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."?[129]

Her pleas for contributions were successful. Originally, her organization had planned to pay for one half of the Oaxacan chapel construction costs. Early into her campaign, she notified her members that they could pay for the total estimated cost of five hundred dollars and asked the National Baptist Convention to fundraise for the furnishings and the organ.[130] National Baptist Convention President Donato Ramírez Ruiz praised the *Unión Femenil* for their "heroic" fundraising labors in 1922. Ramírez Ruiz enthusiastically concluded that their work would lead to literacy and introduce the Gospel to the five million indigenous Mexicans who were monolingual.[131]

Throughout the process of building the chapel, the *Unión Femenil* leadership expressed irritation over the slow pace of progress and threatened to freeze funds until Juárez García and his Oaxacan staff could give evidence of progress. In November 1925, *Unión Femenil* President Amada T. de García informed her readers "with much

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[129] Esther G. de Montes, "Un Llamado a la Mujer Cristiana Mexicana," *El Atalaya Bautista,* January 17, 1922, 73. Original Spanish: "¿Cuantas hermanas aprovecharán esta oportunidad, recordando las palabras de nuestro bendito Maestro que dijo: 'De cierto os digo que en cuanto lo hiciste a uno de estos pequeñitos, a mi lo hiciste?' No olvidemos orar y trabajar por Cristo."

[130] Ibid.

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embarrassment" that the chapel was still not ready due to what Juárez García claimed were frequent rains and scheduling conflicts with the contractor.[132] A year earlier, De García had written an exasperated letter to *CNBM* president Andrés R. Cavazos asking why the Oaxacan missionary did not consider the potential delays with rainy season beforehand, and why did he not find a different contractor. Cavazos and national missionary director Ernesto Uriegas traveled to Tlacochahuaya to oversee the last stage of construction. Juárez García explained to the northern *mestizo* men that within the traditional *cargo* system, a civil-religious hierarchy in the indigenous communities of Oaxaca, the contractor had been obligated by the community to fulfill a municipal position, and hence there was a delay. Cavazos and Uriegas knew little about this tradition and saw it as an obstacle to efficiency and progress.[133] Mestizo frustration with indigenous customs is evident in their insinuations that the Zapotec chapel would have dragged on for years if it had not been for their supervision.

After substantial delays, the chapel finally opened on May 30, 1926, and its photograph graced the cover of *El Atalaya Bautista* (figure 3).[134] The total cost of the chapel was $2,300 (4.6 times the original budget), which the *Unión Femenil* of Mexico had raised in full. Juárez García proudly noted that, from the architect to the last laborer,

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[131] "A Raíz de la Convención Nacional," *El Atalaya Bautista,* November 11, 1922.

[132] Amada T. de García, "Capilla de Tlacochahuaya," *El Atalaya Bautista,* November 26, 1925.

[133] For background on the historical significance of the cargo system, see John K. Chance and William B. Taylor, "Cofradías and Cargos: An Historical Perspective on the Mesoamerican Civil-religious Hierarchy," in *American Ethnologist* 12 (1986): 1-26.

[134] This religious news journal was published in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez from 1908-1930; then its name switched to *La Luz Bautista.*

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everyone involved in the construction of the Church was of the Zapotec ethnicity.[135] He also reported that Catholics unsuccessfully tried to burn down the door of the chapel the night before the dedication.[136]

Meanwhile, the Mexican Women's Union sent a delegation down to Oaxaca to attend the church dedication. Eva Borocio, treasurer of the *Unión,* wrote: "Despite all of the intrigues of the devil to obstruct the dedication ceremony, the temple has enjoyed larger than usual attendance, and it was filled up entirely the day we dedicated it to the TRUE God. It is a beautiful building, as you can see, and represents with dignity the Baptist cause in that far off

region of our Republic."[137] Although the Women's Union members were pleased with the completion of the chapel, they soon articulated serious concerns about Zapotec religious practices.

Based on *La Unión Feminil's* trip to Tlacochahuaya for the church inauguration, their editorial page in *El Atalyaya Bautista* on June 17, 1926 featured an article entitled "Costumbres Típicas de los Zapotecas." The ethnographic-style piece was overflowing with criticism of women's subordination in folk Catholicism, the fiesta system, and traditional healing methods. *La Unión Femenil* described Zapotecs as "a very strong and clean race but their ignorance has brought them to ruins. All of their customs are daughters of their religion; from this religion, mixed with the primitive adoration of idols,

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[135] Juárez García, "Capilla Bautista de Tlacochahuaya, Oaxaca," *El Atalaya Bautista,* July 29, 1926, 564.

[136] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Todo estaba listo para el 30 de mayo, pero, ¡oh, Satanás que no descansas! La víspera de la dedicación fue colocada una estopa impregnada de petróleo en la puerta de la capilla la que se consumió sin haber dado los resultados deseados. Esto fue un verdadero milagro del Señor. ¡Gloria a Él!"

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has come to form a disgusting cult."[138] The Baptist women hoped to eradicate what they deemed vestiges of paganism: the syncretic fusion of saints with native deities and pre-Hispanic rituals that they believed fueled expensive, mescal driven fiestas.

EL ATALAYA BAUTISTA

TOMO XII. EL PASO, TEXAS, y C. JUAREZ, CHIH., JULIO 29 DE 1926 NUMERO [illegible]

CAPILLA BAUTISTA DE TLACOCHAHUAYA, OAX.

Valor de la obra $2,303.69.

La [illegible] la Unión Femenil Nacional Bautista de México.

Dirigió la Obra el Sr. Samuel J. García.

Se dedicó al culto público el día 20 de mayo de 1926.

(Véase la página 564).

Figure 3. ***El Atalaya Bautista's*** **1926 cover story on the Tlacochahuaya Church's inauguration.**

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[137] E. Borocio, "Nuestra Capilla de Tlacochahuaya," *El Atalaya Bautista*, 12:32, August 12, 1926, 596. Original Spanish: "Es un hermoso edificio, como puede verse y representa dignamente la causa

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The account went on to describe the condition of the Zapotec woman as "sadder than you can imagine," citing unbalanced gender roles in marriage and civic life, where a woman lives in a "virtual state of slavery, subject to all of the desires of the man practically treating her like a cargo animal; she has no rights to anything." In particular, the account lamented how Zapotec women sat on the ground during civic ceremonies while men sat on benches.[139] Mexican women could not vote, but the Baptist women interpreted their role as Revolutionary Mexican citizens to integrate indigenous peoples into the fabric of the nation. Part of this integration meant learning Spanish, breaking from the grips of Catholicism, and especially ending their dependency on *curanderas,* or healers.[140]

Like many missionary organizations, the Baptist Women's Union representatives disapproved of traditional healing methods and favored Western-style clinics to operate in indigenous communities.[141] The representatives were particularly horrified by the Zapotec practice of searching for a child's *alma* (soul) if she became ill, the 'peculiar' practice of feeding a hardboiled egg to an infant stricken by *mal de ojo* (evil eye), and

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bautista en aquella lejana región de nuestra República."

[138] *Unión Femenil y Del Hogar*, "Costumbres Típicas de los Zapotecas," June 17, 1926.

[139] Ibid.

[140] See Carolyn Gallaher, "The Role of Protestant Missionaries in Mexico's Indigenous Awakening," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 26:1 (January 2007): 88-111 for a discussion of conversion to Protestantism stemming from free access to missionary clinics. For Seventh Day Adventist health clinics in Mexico, see C.E. Conwell, "The Need of Medical Missions in Mexico," *The Medical Missionary* 22:11(November, 1913): 319-323.

[141] Ironically, some of the very practices the Baptist women condemned, such as saving umbilical cords, are currently expensive and highly recommended medical practices in the Western world.

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preserving umbilical cords in healing ceremonies.[142] The *Unión Femenil* described the practice in their newsletter:

> When a child gets sick and naturally is weak and sad, they say: the soul has already left the child, and then they start thinking and investigating about how the soul might have gotten kicked out by a bang or maybe frightened away by a startle. Once they have found the site, they clear it out and clean it, decorating it with flowers and put in the center of it a pot with water and flowers. Once all of this has been arranged, they bring the child there and sing to him until he falls asleep in the arms of his mother. Later they lay the child's down on the ground, placing the pot with water and the flowers near the child's head. A new pitcher, this one is broken on top of a large rock prepared for the effect, producing a strong noise that makes the child wake up, very frightened. Then the mother in a loud voice in Zapotec says: 'Let's go, let's go child, to the house,' and saying this, she hits the ground with the palm of her right hand and, taking the child by his feet, hangs him over the pot that has the water and flowers. After this strange ceremony, she takes the child in her arms and gives him a boiled egg to eat without letting a piece of egg fall.[143]

The newsletter concluded that Zapotec mothers "almost always prefer their remedies or visit witches or healers, than accept the services of a doctor."[144] In other words, the northern Mexican Baptist women, like the nascent Mexican government's health outreach programs, did not trust traditional health remedies in Zapotec communities. The closing line of the article perhaps best exemplifies the Baptist Union's aspirations for indigenous Mexico: "We wish that Christ blesses work with the Indians, so that, illuminated by the Gospel, the Indians can raise themselves up, dignified by better luck,

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[142] *Unión Femenil*, "Costumbres Típicas de los Zapotecas," June 17, 1926. For further background on Zapotec traditional healing practices, see Lynn Stephen, *Zapotec Women: Gender, Class, and Ethnicity in Globalized Oaxaca* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), and Barabas, *Dones, dueños y santos.*

[143] Ibid.

[144] Ibid.Original Spanish: "Pero casi siempre prefieren sus remedios o recurrir a brujos y curanderos, que aceptar los servicios de un doctor."

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free of the fanaticism and ignorance that drowns them in misery."[145] Like their male counterparts, the Baptist Women's Union viewed the residents of Tlacochahuaya as dual victims of Catholicism and their indigenous heritage. To these women, indigenous Mexicans needed their spiritual and educational guidance to progress. Revitalizing or preserving their present culture(s) was not an option. The *mestizo/indígena* binary was not only a geographic *northern/southern* one but also a gendered one: meztizos were the dominant, sanctioned, males and indigenous peoples were the subordinate, unsanctioned, females. Mestiza women from northern Mexico viewed indigenous Mexico as weak and child-like much like the original Spanish colonizers saw indigenous peoples. Spanish colonizers viewed native religious traditions as weak, feminine, and sacrilegious while the Catholic religion was the powerful, masculine, and sacred opposite.[146]

His first church built with the help of the Women's Union, Juárez García cast his eye to the Zapotec coastal region of Oaxaca and even Mayan Chiapas. The missionary asked for more funding to expand his missionary territory and to purchase a horse. He mentioned that, in addition to the bicycles and ox-teams that he and his assistants utilized, another horse would allow them to reach more remote areas. His request was granted, but his superiors in the Baptist Convention reflected over how unrealistic the Convention's original timeline was for evangelical conversion in Oaxaca. Missionary President Moisés Arévalo concluded in October 1926: "The general perspective of the work in the Zapotec region is good. But it demands patience and steadiness so that it may work actively,

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[145] Ibid. "¡Quiera el Señor bendecir su obra entre los indios, para que, iluminados por el Evangelio de paz, pueda levantarse esa raza, digna de mejor suerte, libre del fanatismo y la ignorancia que la hunden en la miseria!"

[146] See Laura A. Lewis, *Hall of Mirrors: Power, Witchcraft and Caste in Colonial Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 172-173, for her conceptualization of sanctioned/unsanctioned

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although the results achieved will be very slow. But remember it is promised in the Holy Word that these works of the faithful are not done in vain."[147] The Northern Baptists, mostly mestizos visiting "Indian country" for the first time, underestimated the strongly woven cultural norms and social organization in Oaxacan communities. Finally, Juárez García's work influenced Presbyterian efforts in the same region.

Relations with the Presbyterian Church

In Oaxaca, Presbyterians were aware of Juárez García's work in the Zapotec Central Valleys. They had been in Oaxaca since the Plan de Cincinnati granted them jurisdiction in Chiapas and Oaxaca in 1914, replacing the Methodists.[148] On August 16, 1923, Presbyterian missionary Lawrence Van Slyke remarked that his own mission site in the Zapotec community Yatzachi in the Sierra Norte was making considerable progress. However, he lamented that, as much as he tried to learn Zapotec, he was unable to carry on a conversation in the language, making it difficult to connect with villagers. "No well-trained Indian has as yet, in our own field, gone back to his people with the Gospel."[149] He reported that the Baptist Church had a seminary-trained native Zapotec speaker—Juárez García. Van Slyke was, however, quick to report that Juárez García had not accomplished as much as he should have due to a lack of guidance from his Baptist superiors, something the Presbyterian Mission, of course, would never let happen. Van Slyke concluded: "At the same time, his work has been far better than nothing…We feel

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spaces in colonial Mexico and the roles of Spaniards, mestizos and indigenous peoples in creating, negotiating and disputing these domains.

[147] Moisés Arévalo, "La misión entre los Zapotecos," *El Atalaya Bautista,* October 2, 1926.

[148] For background on the 1914 Cincinnati plan, including original missionary territorial maps from the historic conference, see W. Reginald Wheeler, *Modern Missions in Mexico* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1925), 118-134.

[149] Reverend L.P. Van Slyke, quoted in Wheeler, *Modern Missions in Mexico*, 276-277.

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that the training of young Indian men to be the teachers of their people is a vital part of the program of evangelization, but we do not feel that it alone, with occasional visitations from the missionary, would be at all adequate."[150] The Presbyterian minister recognized the importance of having a native missionary similar in skill to the Baptist Juárez García. However, Van Slyke did not want to repeat the practice of Catholic Dominican friars in the sixteenth century who brought the Gospel to remote Zapotec communities like Yatzachi and then could not serve them.

A competition over Chiapas in the late 1920s led to bad blood between the Presbyterians and Baptists. In spring of 1927, Juárez García headed to Chiapas to establish a Baptist network with Mayan Mexicans. He had the backing of the General Missionary Board and expressed excitement about reaching a new region. During a week-long journey by horse to the isthmus—the train line never materialized—García distributed Bibles and met with Zapotec *creyentes* (believers) in San Bartolo Coyotepec, Ocotlán, Tehuantepec, and Juchitán. He distributed over 50,000 pages of Protestant pamphlets and sold eleven Bibles and five New Testaments.[151] Upon hearing about Baptists in Chiapas, he visited Tapachula, a city near the border of Guatemala. However, Juárez García described difficulties with the already established Presbyterian Church.[152] The Presbyterian authorities accused him of stealing their congregants and of not seeking permission to visit their jurisdiction. The Presbyterian publication in Mexico, *El Nuevo*

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[150] Ibid.

[151] Juárez García, "Informe que rinde el Comisionado para hacer la visita a los hermanos de Tapachula, Chiapas, México, que así lo solicitaron" *El Atalaya Bautista,* April 7, 1927.

[152] This Baptist-Presbyterian rivalry could have had nineteenth century roots. Melinda Rankin, a Presbyterian and the first U.S. missionary to establish a mission in northern Mexico, competed with British-American Baptist missionary Thomas Westrup over converts in the 1860s. See Rankin, *Twenty Years Among the Mexicans,* and Frank W. Patterson, *A Century of Baptist Work in Mexico,* (El Paso: Baptist Spanish Publishing House, 1979).

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Faro, wrote a scathing denunciation of Juárez García's visit to Chiapas. Juárez García responded by accusing the Presbyterian missionaries of not honoring the Lord's command to "Go into all the World and Preach his Gospel, (Mark 16:15)."[153] Juárez García further lamented that, instead of working together as Evangelicals, the Presbyterians treated his Baptist team as the enemy.[154] The Presbyterian/Baptist rivalry fits into the national struggle over Protestantism. Competition was not always between Catholics and Protestants but also between different Protestant denominations. Despite the allegedly firm Plan de Cincinnati that divided Mexico between the different Protestant missionary organizations, Baptists wanted to penetrate into Chiapas, historically Presbyterian territory. In an increasingly competitive religious marketplace, nascent Protestant denominations had to work hard to protect their territories much like Franciscans, Dominicans, and Augustinians competing for prime mission zones in sixteenth century Mexico.[155]

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[153] Juárez García, "No es de Extrañarse," *El Atalaya Bautista,* May 7, 1927.

[154] Ibid.

[155] See Robert Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) for a discussion of missionary zones and competition between religious orders in colonial Mexico.

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Figure 4. Samuel Juárez García (far right) preparing for a mission trip, 1928. Source: Salomón Hernández Juárez, Tlacochahuaya, Oaxaca.

Protestantism and Political Violence

While religious conflicts during the 1920s in Oaxaca paled in comparison to the Cristero violence in central Mexico, the 1930s were particularly volatile in Oaxaca.[156] As was the trend at the Federal level, the Oaxacan government welcomed Protestant organizations as a means of modernizing and incorporating Oaxaca's sixteen distinct indigenous groupings.[157] However, such governmental involvement led to Protestants and Catholics engaging in often violent interactions in their claim to indigenous souls. Such violence also supported the cause for martyrdom, particularly in the case of Juárez García.

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[156] Jean Meyer, *El Conflicto religioso en Oaxaca: 1926-1938*, (Oaxaca: UABJO, 2006), 3.

[157] See Todd Hartch, *Missionaries of the State*: *The Summer Institute of Linguistics, State Formation, and Indigenous Mexico, 1935-1985* for an in-depth analysis of the relationship of the Mexican government with Protestant missionary organizations.

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During his 1932-1936 administration, Oaxacan Governor Anastacio García Toledo, a close friend of former president Plutarco Elías Calles, closely followed Calles's model for limiting the Catholic Church's authority.[158] For its part, the Catholic archdiocese was careful to encourage non-violent resistance in Oaxaca. For example, the Oaxacan archdiocese, led by Archbishop José Othón Núñez y Zárate, was adamant that Catholics use legal channels and non-violence to protest the "Calles Law" that had implemented the anti-clerical articles of the 1917 Constitution. This resistance led to inventories being made of everything from how many pews the building had to whether the chalices were made of real gold or not on all church buildings. Priests had to hand over the keys to the church to the local authorities because church buildings and property were now property of the nation.[159] The 1932-formed Confederación Oaxaqueña de Campesinos (COC) was an agrarian group particularly concerned with making sure the Catholic Church followed Article 24 of the Constitution to the letter. In October 1934, the COC fined San Augustín Etla priest Ramón Ramírez de Aguilar 500 pesos for allowing additional priests to operate in his parish, violating the strict clergy quota in the state of Oaxaca.[160] During the late 1920s and the early 1930s, Archbishop Núñez y Zárate was expelled from Oaxaca several times due to his non-conformity with state restrictions on clergy ratios and church closings.[161]

The Catholic archdiocese was concerned with the growth of Protestantism in Oaxaca. On September 19, 1923, Archbishop Núñez y Zárate visited Tlacochahuaya. The

[158] Meyer, *El Conflicto religioso en Oaxaca,* 54-55.

[159] "La entrega de los templos a los juntas vecinales se lleva a cabo," *El Informador,* September 28, 1934.

[160] "Los Campesinos Vigilarán que se cumpla la ley de cultos," *El Oaxaqueño,* October, 31, 1934.

[161] "La Iglesia y la cuestión social*," El Oaxaqueño*, January 30, 1935.

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Archbishop declared: "despite the farcical attempts by the Protestants to convert the town, they've failed to do so, because the residents still strongly practice the faith bestowed upon them by their elders."[162] The *Revista Oficial* was the archdiocese's monthly publication. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the publication warned its readers to be cautious of the "amistoso" (friendly) Protestant missionaries, especially since their churches could have links to socialist schools in Oaxaca. Archbishop Núñez y Zárate closed his pastoral letter by warning all parents not to let their children accept gifts such as Bibles, pencils, or candies from Protestant missionaries.[163]

As in many parts of Mexico during the post-revolutionary era, Oaxaca was a hotbed for socialist organizations, marches, and "Red Saturdays," which included lessons on national history and presentations on Oaxaqueño cultural specialties from regional cuisine to folk dance. Tlacochahuaya was an active supporter of Cárdenista agrarian reform policies, which dovetailed with his educational policy. Protestants there participated in the burning of images of saints and demanding an audit of the Catholic Church's inventory.

Meanwhile, a series of violent conflicts between Catholics and Protestants in Oaxaca impeded Baptist growth just after the Tlacochahuayan chapel was completed.[164] Eliseo Manzano, one of Juárez García's early converts, wrote a 1958 article detailing persecution against the minister. Manzano argued that Juárez García infuriated local

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[162] "Visita Pastoral," *Revista Oficial del Arzobispado de Antequera,* 2 (September 1923), 70-71. Original Spanish: "A pesar de los esfuerzos que ha hecho la farsa protestante por apartar de su fe a este pueblo, no ha logrado conseguirlo, pues son todavía fuertes en la fe católica que recibieron de sus mayores."

[163] Ibid.

[164] See Jean Meyer, "Religious Conflict and Catholic Resistance in 1930s Oaxaca," in Matthew Butler, ed., *Faith and Impiety in Revolutionary Mexico* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) for background information on religious conflict in *cardenista* Oaxaca.

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Catholics after 1926 by inviting Protestants from neighboring towns and cities to visit his home and admire the new church. Manzano added that, while Father Ignacio Morales had good-naturedly engaged Juárez García in theological discussion during the early 1920s, by 1928, a new priest with less tolerance for Protestantism and certainly opposed to the anticlericalism of the Cristiada period arrived. Father Enrique López was suspicious of Juárez García's activities and complained to the Archdiocese of Oaxaca about the spread of Protestantism in his town.[165]

The conflict between Catholics and Protestants was the frequent subject of local newspaper accounts and petitions sent to local, state, and federal authorities. In Tlacochahuaya, this religious conflict also broke down along political lines. The Protestants identified themselves as *agraristas*, supporters of President Lázaro Cárdenas's bold land distribution program, while Catholics opposed such legislation. For example, in late 1934, Damien Ángeles, leader of the town's Catholic Association, was shot six times in the back as he worked in his garlic field.[166] With assistance from Acción Catolica (Catholic Action, a lay advocacy group) in Oaxaca, Catholics in Tlacochahuaya wrote letters to the district court, to Governor Anastasio García Toledo (1932-1936), and to President Cárdenas (1934-1940) in December 1934 demanding an investigation of Ángeles's murder.[167] The Protestant assailants were not charged despite the Catholic pressure. Elvira Cruz García, one of the eldest surviving Baptists in Tlacochahuaya, recalled the local religious roots of the conflict. "Everything was fine until, I'm not sure

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[165] Eliseo Manzano, *Samuel J. García, Mártir de Tlacochahuaya,* 1958.

[166] "Asesinato Cometido en Tlacochahuaya: Un grupo de hombres Asaltó a Damián Ángeles, *El Informador,* October 4, 1934.

[167] Dirección Jurídica y de Gobierno, Pleitos Religiosos, Tlacochahuaya, 1934, AGEPEO.

[167] Ibid.

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exactly what year, a priest arrived, and this priest began to provoke disturbances here. He began to fill people's head with ideas like they shouldn't be friends with Samuel García."[168] It made sense that Juárez García became a target of Catholic violence.

By the 1930s, Juárez García was a prominent missionary in the state known throughout the Sierra Juárez and beyond. He also was the local postmaster and a card carrying Mason in Oaxaca City. Above all, he was a staunch supporter of *Cardenista* land reform projects. While his religion was certainly an important factor, his death also points to the connection between Protestantism and pro-revolutionary ideologies that were an anathema to traditionally Catholic communities. However, neither Manzano nor Cruz García mentions the series of events leading up to the murder of Juárez García and his followers that point to escalating tensions between the Catholics and Protestants. For those Baptists, Juárez García's murder was religiously, not politically, motivated. For Catholic Tlacochahuayans, Ángeles's murder was their rallying call for justice.

On January 1, 1935, *El Informador* reported that, according to Catholics, Tlacochahuaya's evangelical preacher, Samuel Juárez García, had provoked prejudice and attracted adversaries.[169] Manzano's simple explanation that Father López felt threatened by the competition from the charismatic Protestant minister's presence in the town and, therefore, asked Catholics to murder him is insufficient. There was more than a

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[168] Elvira Cruz García, interview with the author, Tlacochahuaya, Oaxaca, October 2, 2009. Original Spanish: "Todo estuvo bien hasta que no sé exactamente el año que llegó un cura, y ese cura es el que empezó a provocar, empezar disturbios aquí. Empezó a meterle ideas a la gente del pueblo de que no les conviene la amistad con el difunto, con Samuel García."

[169] "Pugna política en Tlacochahuaya: Se atribuye la intranquilidad al Sr. S.J. García," *El Informador,* January 1, 1935.

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decade-long build up of tensions between Catholics and Protestants, the latter of whom often supported the implementation of socialist education in *Cardenista* Oaxaca.[170]

Martyrdom

Exactly one year from the date of his murder, Catholics attended a vigil mass for Damián Ángeles on the evening of October 4, 1935 that lasted until the early morning hours of October 5. The mass concluded the weeklong celebration honoring Saint Jerome, the town's patron saint. That morning before dawn, a group of Catholics murdered Pastor Samuel Juárez García in his home along with five other *evangélicos* active in the agrarian society.[171] The murder carved Juárez García's martyrdom in historical stone for Baptists in the village. Catholics disagree that his murder was religiously motivated, arguing that Juárez García's death was just another example of agrarista violence that had plagued Mexico throughout the 1920s and 1930s, thus disconnecting religion from politics. Furthermore, Catholics in Tlacochahuaya maintain that Protestant deaths received more attention from authorities than Catholic ones since the Protestants were more likely to support agrarianism. Indeed, Juárez García was a supporter of President Cáredenas's bold land reform policies.

Many community elders remember the deep divisions in Tlacochahuaya over agrarianism. Salomón Hernández Juárez, a Protestant and a teacher in Tlacochahuaya, was eight years old in 1935, but he remembers the divisions in the town through the stories his father and uncles told him. He stated:

> Back then, the municipal authorities were influenced by the *ejidatarios*, the agrarianists, let's call them, that's what they were called back then, no? The town

[170] "Misiones Culturales enviadas a Oaxaca por mandato expreso del Presidente Cárdenas para desarrollar labor efectiva en las comunidades indígenas," *El Oaxaqueño*, 14 September, 1937.

[171] Manzano, *Samuel J. García, Mártir.*

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> divided into two sectors. Starting in 1928, the division started and it lasted until 1935 when the popular sector killed Samuel. The town was already divided, and there was already a popular and an agrarian sector; that's how they identified. That's why I believe that Samuel was killed unjustly.[172]

Similarly, Elvira Cruz García was only two years old at the time of the minister's murder, but she remembers her mother telling her about the morning of October 5, 1935: "What happened there, I know about it because of my mother; my mother went to grind her corn at his house that morning."[173] Cruz García said her mother waited at dawn but no one answered the door. Seconds later, a group of men and women rushed out of the house, slamming the door. Cruz García's mother asked them what had happened, but no one responded. She heard shots fired in other parts of the town center. Eventually, another woman stopped by to use the mill, and they both decided to enter the house.

Cruz García alleges that one of the Catholic women had smashed Samuel Juárez García's head with a *metate* (flat stone for grinding) after he was already dead from shots to his chest, leaving a stain of blood on the wall behind him. She said the stain on the wall is still there today. Cruz García described the minister's death:

> What happened the year they killed Samuel, is very, how shall I put it, well remembered. So, there where he fell against the piles of corn, they beat him in the head and then his brain stained the wall behind him. And it doesn't matter how many times they tried to remove the stain, it has never disappeared. My father-in-law was doing some maintenance on that house. And in that room, said my father-in-law, he's said it several times, it's been painted and repainted but the stain

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[172] Salomón Hernández Juárez, interview with author, Tlacochahuaya, Oaxaca, March 14, 2010. Original Spanish: "Desde entonces, ya la autoridad municipal ya la mandaba el grupo, el grupo de los ejidatarios los agraristas, dijéramos, así los llamaban ¿no? Los agraristas porque había un sector agrario y el sector, el sector popular. Se dividió el pueblo en dos sectores pues de acá y de allá, desde 1928 empezó la división y hasta que por fin ya para 1935 cuando mataron [a Samuel], ya estaban divididos ya recibían el nombre del sector popular y agrario con esa, con ese nombre ya se identificaban. Así que, creo que Samuel murió injustamente."

[173] Cruz García, interview with author, Tlacochahuaya, Oaxaca, October 2, 2009.

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never was removed. **That's why I say that the blood is still demanding justice.**[174] [Emphasis added]

In Cruz García's interview, memory is social and shared. She knows what happened because of oral tradition passed down from her mother and her father-in-law. Was Cruz García's description of Pastor Samuel Juárez García's the dominant narrative or was it contested? Catholics in Tlacochahuaya insist that the focus on Juárez García obfuscates agrarian violence in which they also lost family members.

Ultimately**,** General Maximino Ávila Camacho led federal soldiers to Tlacochahuaya and detained seven suspects who were arraigned in the district seat at Tlacolula. Oaxacan governor García Toledo approved Juárez García for a government-funded burial with honor in the civic cemetery.[175] The soldiers occupied Tlacochahuaya for several months and collected all firearms. Because of Juárez García's death, the National Baptist Convention abandoned its missionary work in Tlacochahuaya for several decades.[176]

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[174] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Lo que pasó en el año que mataron al difunto Samuel, es muy, como le diré, muy recordada. Pues allá en donde él se recargó sobre esos bultos, entonces, cuando le pegaron entonces pues se golpeó su cabeza y entonces salpicó la masa cefálica en la pared y por más que lo quitaron esa vez pues me imagino que sí lo limpiaron o quien sabe pero nunca se desapareció. Entonces mi suegro estuvo dando mantenimiento a esa casa. Y ese cuarto, dice mi suegro, lo muchas veces dice, lo pintó y lo repintó pero jamás quitó. **Por eso, digo que la sangre está clamando justicia aún, todavía."** [Emphasis added]

[175] "Como Fue El Sangriento Motín Que Ocurrió En Un Pueblo De Oaxaca ,"*Continental,* October, 13 1935. See also *Periódico Oficial,* October, 1935.

[176] CNBM ran the G.H. Lacy Baptist seminary in Tlacolula, Oaxaca from 1938-1943 before it moved to Puebla and then finally returned it to the city of Oaxaca from 1960-present. However, the CNBM did not reestablish missionary work in Tlacochahuaya until 2005. http://www.seminariolacy.org/, accessed July 1, 2012. See also "Recuperación de la obra," *La Luz Bautista,* 19 (April 2007), 5.

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Figure 5. Remains of the original Baptist Church of Tlacochahuaya, Spring 2010. Photo: Kathleen McIntyre

Elvira Cruz García has been at the forefront of the Baptist Church's efforts to depict Juárez García as a crucial indigenous Protestant martyr for Mexico, thus doubly inscribed as a martyr by religion and national identity given his political stance on agrarianism.[177] When she describes his death, she always associates Juárez García with images of corn, collapsing in his home with stalks of corn surrounding him as if he blended into the corn and returned to the earth. It is significant that he falls onto corn stalks, back into the earth, which has ties to Christianity and pre-Hispanic sacredness. As

[177] See also Arthur Bonner, *We will not be stopped: Evangelical Persecution, Catholicism and Zapatismo in Chiapas, Mexico* (Boca Raton, Florida: Universal Publishers, 1998), for an overview of evangelical indigenous martyrdom in Chiapas written for a North American missionary audience.

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the Baptists in town struggle to rebuild his church, Cruz García's belief that the minister's blood is still clamoring for justice suggests that she interprets his death as martyrdom for religious freedom in her town.[178] Such imagery is similar to the symbolism surrounding the 1919 murder of Revolutionary leader Emiliano Zapata, whose push for agrarian reform became the embodiment of Article 27 of the Constitution. As one Zapotec woman put it in 1995: "Zapata saw the suffering of the peasants…that is why he died." [179] During the 1930s agrarian movement that Juárez García supported, President Cárdenas and the Ministry of Education had appropriated Zapata as a symbol of the national government. As historian Mary Kay Vaughn explains: "When the SEP constructed Zapata as a hero, they sanitized him: He did not drink, womanize, or gamble, nor did he carry the banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe."[180] Such imagery and symbolism creates martyrs out of both Zapata and Juárez García on a national, indigenous, and a religious level. Zapata's 'sanitized' values and Christ-like sacrifices mirror those that Protestants were trying to emulate. Thus, Cruz García's description of the former minister's death straddles Protestant, indigenous, and patriotic identities.

As stated earlier, Catholics contest the marriage of religion and politics as reasoning for Juárez García's death and its impact on the community. Catholic Carlos Martínez has a very different perspective on religious conflict in Tlacochahuaya and offers insight into current problems with Protestants not contributing to community fiestas. Martínez, who was thirteen years old in 1935, recalled that many

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[178] For an analysis of corn as a symbol of indigenous identity in southern Mexico, see Alicia Barabas, *Dones, dueños y santos*: *Ensayo sobre religiones en Oaxaca* (México, D.F.: INAH, 2006), 64-65.

[179] Angela López Martínez, as quoted in Lynn Stephen, *¡Zapata Lives! Histories and Cultural Politics in Southern Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 304.

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Tlacochahuayans (Catholic and Protestant) fled the town and sought refuge in Oaxaca City or relocated to Mexico City during this time. His family left for six months out of fear there would be more violence in retribution for Juárez García's murder. Martínez recalled:

> The Protestants used to call us owls because we'd go to mass very early, before dawn. In the 1930s, they began to burn images of the saints. I was thirteen years old in 1935 and I remember when the Catholics did their religious processions, the Protestants tried to offend the Catholics on the day of San Jerónimo [town patron saint], September 30th. They began to march and collect images of the saints to burn. They would shout, "Here goes another one!" I ask you if this is evidence of progress and intelligence for our town? We [the Catholics] were not agrarianists because we didn't want to be such loudmouths. However, the funny thing is that although they [Protestants] say that Catholics are friends of the devil because we drink, they have no problem accepting mescal in a party if it's free. But, they won't give any money [toward a festivity] because they hide behind their religion.[181]

Martínez, like many Catholics in his town, interprets Protestant opposition to traditional rituals or customs as politically and financially, not religiously, motivated. By asserting that Catholics did not want to be such loudmouths [*tan habladores*], Martínez is also implying that the Protestants were all talk and no action.

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[180] Mary Kay Vaughn, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: university of Arizona Press, 1997), 42.

[181]Carlos Martínez, interview with author, Tlacochahuaya, Oaxaca, 30 September 2009. Original Spanish: "Los protestantes nos llamaron búhos porque íbamos a la misa muy temprano, antes del amanecer. En los 30s, empezaron a quemar imágenes de los santos. Yo tenía 13 años en 1935 y me acuerdo que cuando los católicos hicieron sus procesiones, los protestantes trataban de ofender a los católicos durante el día 30 de septiembre, el día de San Jerónimo. Empezaron a marchar y colectar imágenes de los santos. Gritaban, '¡aquí va otra!' ¿Yo te pregunto si esto es evidencia de progreso e inteligencia para nuestro pueblo? No éramos agraristas porque no queríamos ser tan habladores. Sin embargo, lo chistoso es que aunque dicen que nosotros andamos con el diablo porque tomamos, ellos no tienen pena de aceptar el mezcal en una fiesta cuando este es gratis. Pero, no hacen donaciones porque se escudan atrás de su religión."

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Martínez's interview raises important questions about the relationship between tradition and Protestantism in indigenous communities.[182] Religious conversion created a different set of problems for closely knit communities. For example, what is the impact of Protestantism on the annual patron saint fiesta, participation in non-remunerated tequio (communal work) projects, and fulfillment of a *cargo* (civil-religious hierarchy) position, all concepts that Zapotec Catholics argue are key components of communal identity? New converts, as Carlos's interview suggests, chose not to participate consistently or at all in the fiesta system. In contrast, Protestants argue that many of the community rituals involved alcohol and dancing and that the collective labor projects served the Catholic churches where they no longer worshiped. Religious conflicts continued to invoke these same focal points—especially collective labor projects and participation in fiestas—components that were closely associated with indigenous identity.

After Juárez García's death, his church remained empty for almost seventy-five years. His followers worshiped in their homes or traveled to Oaxaca City to attend services at other churches. Today, Baptist men and women in Tlacochahuaya are working to revitalize Juárez García's legacy by rebuilding his church and presenting his murder as a central example of Protestant martyrdom in Oaxaca. School curriculums only recently started teaching about the Cristiada rebellion and the execution of Catholic clergy who refused to abide by the Federal restrictions on public displays of religion in the late

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[182] At the basic level, *usos y costumbres,* or ways and customs of the people, is a set of collective norms that indigenous communities rely on for self-government. Currently, 418 out of 570 municipalities in Oaxaca operate by customary law. For a more thorough background on *usos y costumbres*, see Todd Eisentadt, "Usos y Costumbres and Postelectoral Conflicts in Oaxaca, Mexico, 1995-2004," in *American Research Review* 42: 1 (2007): 52-77. Eisentadt offers criticism for the recent legalization of *usos y costumbres* practices since it clearly subordinates the role of women in political life.

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1920s.[183] Protestants want to be a part of this history of struggle for religious freedom but not in opposition to the state; rather, they feel that they helped advance the cultural benefits of the 1910 Revolution by bringing literacy, healthcare, and freedom from the "yoke" of Catholicism. This narrative breaks from the official story of twentieth century martyrdom in Mexico that tends to focus on the Jesuits and other priests killed in Central Western Mexico between 1926 and 1929. This martyrdom also competes with colonial era indigenous martyrs from the Sierra Norte who died defending Catholic missionaries.[184]

Tourists, in addition to enjoying Oaxaca's rich cuisine and the beaches, also come to see the colonial history of Catholicism in the region: the shrines to the Virgin Mary, the unfinished Dominican convent where Independence leader José María Morelos was executed, or the gold-plated interiors of Oaxaca's sixteenth century Dominican churches. To begin forming Baptists' century-long history in Oaxaca, Baptists are trying to have the church recognized as a historic site through the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH). Elvira Cruz García and her extended family are actively working with the Convención Bautista to renovate the church—now overgrown with weeds and on the verge of collapsing—and celebrate services on the original site. At present, however, they are embroiled in a lawsuit over the boundaries of the property. As they rebuild the church and defend the original property lines, the Tlacochahuayan Baptists have received visits from the Brownsville, Texas based organization "Go and Tell Ministries."[185]

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[183] David Naglieri, "Freedom is our Lives," *Columbia,* May 2012, 10.

[184] Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-Between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 1-2 and 127.

[185] http://www.goandtellmexico.org/Ministries/The_Oaxaca_Project/, accessed July 1, 2012.

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Zapotec Baptists are forming a history that asserts their claims to martyrdom and patriotism. The abandoned 1926 church is a testament to their contested history in the community. The mantels in their homes showcase old photographs from Juárez García's ministry in Tlacochahuaya arranged carefully between vases of flowers, similar to a Catholic home altar but missing the Virgin of Guadalupe and patron saints. As oral history theorist Lynn Abrams elucidates, "historical memory, is a memory (or a representation) of a past that is lost, whereas collective memory is anchored in the social groups that actively preserves and reinterprets that past via the consciousness of those who are still alive."[186] Cruz García was not present when the Baptist minister was murdered, yet the shared memory of his church's history lived on so strongly in her family that she felt an intimate connection. Abrams suggests that shared memory can have "such a powerful impact on those growing up within it that they have adopted the memories as their own and seek to ensure that these memories (and the victims) are not forgotten."[187] In Tlacochahuaya I see Baptist Protestant memory as straddling both the collective and historical realms.

Conclusion

In southern Mexico where Catholic images are ubiquitous in colorful public murals, in sixteenth century Dominican cathedrals, and on plastic market bags, *lucha libre* (wrestling) masks, belt buckles, and home altars, the religious battle lines in Oaxaca symbolically begin over worship of the Virgin and the patron saint celebrations. For Protestants, the Virgin of Guadalupe (or the Virgin of Juquila or La Soledad) is not their brown mother but merely a tool of conquest whose entrenched presence in Oaxacan

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[186] Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 100-101.

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homes and worship sites is dangerous and blasphemous, a product of colonialism and fanaticism. Instead, in Protestant homes, businesses, and churches, President Benito Juárez is presented as a spiritual father while missionaries, especially native ones like Samuel Juárez García, are revered as the fruition of his liberal Reform period legislation further strengthened by the 1917 constitutional limits on the Catholic Church's authority.

Patriotism and spirituality have intertwined with Protestantism to create alternate systems of martyrdom and new constructions of historical narratives that unite Protestants across political, geographic, and ethnic borders. Protestants died for religious freedom, just like Catholics, but for supporting, not opposing, revolutionary ideologies. The conflict in Tlacochahuaya was a local example of religious violence that had already occurred in central western Mexico during the Cristiada period of 1926-1929. Although it is but one case, Tlacochahuaya demonstrates the intersection of nationalism, identity, tradition, and memory. The imagery surrounding Juárez García's death links Baptists in the community to an indigenous, Christian, and Mexican narrative that transcends their community and connects them with a larger narrative of martyrdom and patriotism.[188]

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[187] Abrams, *Oral History Theory,* 101.

[188] See Stephen, *Zapata Lives!,* 300-308, for a discussion of the links between *zapatismo* and indigenous identity in Oaxaca.

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Figure 6. Baptist meeting, Spring 2010. Photo: Kathleen McIntyre

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Figure 7. Aurora and Salomón Hernández Juárez holding framed picture of Samuel Juárez García. Photo: Kathleen McIntyre

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Chapter Three: Local Conflicts, National Movements, and the Mexican State, 1957-1969

In a May 1958 telegram to Oaxacan Governor Alfonso Pérez Gasca, Cuicatlán Catholics vigorously expressed their disapproval of the state's inquiry into a local dispute. Catholic leader Arturo Rivera proclaimed: "The entirely Catholic population of Cuicatlán categorically objects to the new Protestant Church being constructed here."[189] The highly charged language in this message provides insight into the passionate religious attitudes amongst Cuicatlán residents. From the Catholics' point of view, Cuicatlán had one religion; Protestantism was an unwelcome addition. The letter also proves that indigenous communities such as Cuicatlán had a history and familiarity with negotiating with the state government. Despite being "conquered" in the sixteenth century, indigenous communities still maintained some autonomy as is evident in the colonial and later Mexican government recognition of indigenous political organizations. Additionally, the use of the telegram suggested improved communication between the peripheral district of Cuicatlán and the state capital.[190] What legal leverage did the local community have over the state? Why the outrage over the establishment of one Protestant church? How did the Protestants respond?

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[189] Arturo Rivera, Cuicatlán, Oaxaca, telegram to Governor Alfonso Pérez Gasca, 13 May 1958. Archivo General del Poder Ejecutivo del Estado de Oaxaca, hereafter AGEPEO. Original Spanish: "Población totalmente católica Cuicatlán manifiesta categóricamente inconformidad por estar construyéndose templo protestante esta misma suplicamos le no lo autorice."

[190] See Francie R. Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary Oaxaca: The View from the South, Mexico 1867-1911* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 73-76, for a background to the introduction of telegraph lines, railroad stations, street lighting, and telephone connections in *Porfiriato* Oaxaca. While by the time of the 1910 Revolution parts of Oaxaca were considerably modernized, it is important to remember that indigenous villages did not receive, for example, electricity until the 1950s and 1960s or sometimes even later.

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Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Oaxacan communities like Cuicatlán challenged state and federal laws on religious freedom by arguing that "*en el pueblo, la costumbre es ley* [in the town, custom is law]." Indigenous Catholics framed their objection to Protestant church building by arguing that tradition trumped individual rights. Defending traditional customs also meant that these communities would not tolerate prolonged visits by outsiders nor would they accept new religious beliefs that disrupted daily life. Protestant conversion for indigenous Oaxacans was both a personal and public decision with immediate social ramifications in their communities. Protestants abstaining from religious rituals threaten and often alter social structure in their home communities. Yet, by doing so, they strengthen and share their own identities as cristianos with indigenous peoples from other communities as well as with mestizos.

At the same time, Protestant Oaxacans sought and received legal support from national organizations. Many Oaxacan Protestants benefitted from the legal support of an organized and powerfully connected national evangelical movement. Founded in 1948, the Comité Nacional Evangélico de Defensa's (CONEDEF/National Evangelical Defense Committee) foundational statement called its members to publicly demand justice and freedom of conscience for Protestants in the spirit of Oaxaca native Benito Juárez's 1857 reforms.[191] This coalition of Protestant pastors and attorneys strategically marketed Protestantism as an extension of Mexican nationalism. The committee frequently argued that Catholicism was a vestige of Spanish colonialism that held Mexico back while

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[191] *Adalid,* National Evangelical Defense Committee newsletter, 1:1 (December, 1950), as cited in Deyssy Jael de la Luz García, "Entre el escenario público y privado: la participación cívico-política de los evangélicos mexicanos, 1944-1951," in *Libertades Laicas,* September 17, 2007, http://www.libertadeslaicas.org.mx/images/stories/cursos/iicurso/deyssy.pdf, 12, fn63, accessed on July 1, 2012.

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Protestantism supported the goals of the 1910 Revolution. CONEDEF was particularly effective in advancing Protestants' rights in indigenous communities.[192]

Oaxacan Protestants resourcefully gathered support for themselves and worked to take control over their own lives through these networks. This unity meant that Protestants identified with other converts throughout the state and often throughout Mexico and sometimes the United States. Protestant identity shifted from one based principally locally to one that transcended territorial boundaries. Consequently, Catholics often associated Oaxacan Protestants with American influences; Oaxacan Catholics, indigenous or mestizo, derisively referred to Protestantism as a form of North American cultural imperialism in Mexico.

The 1950s was an important decade for Protestant religious freedom in Mexico.[193] During the presidency of Adolfo Ruiz Cortines (1952-1958), the Mexican government publically intervened in cases of religious intolerance, most notably the 1953 Protestant-Catholic conflict over a new *Iglesia de Dios* (Church of God) building in Tepeji del Río, Hidalgo. In Tepeji, about nine hundred employees at a local textile factory destroyed the new Protestant Church in the town and went on strike with the demand that the five Protestant employees at the factory be fired.[194] This intervention was a watershed

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[192] The Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI) was also founded in 1948. In chapter four, I analyze INI's collaboration with Protestant organizations such as the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) in modernizing to indigenous communities.

[193] In 1950, Protestants composed 1.33% of the Mexican population. In 1960, Protestants made up 1.66% of the Mexican population. INEGI, *Censo General de la población y vivienda mexicana,* 1950, 1960.

[194] Methodist writer and famed journalist Gonzalo Báez-Camargo intensely covered the Tepeji conflict as the Mexican correspondent for the US bi-weekly *The Christian Century*. See Báez-Cargo, "Punish Mob for Attack on Chapel," in *The Christian Century*, September 2, 1953, for Báez-Camargo's on the ground account. For more analysis of Ruiz Cortines's intervention in Hidalgo, see Lindy Scott, *Salt of the Earth: A Socio-Political History of Mexico City Evangelical Protestants, 1964-1991* (Mexico City: Editorial Kyrios, 1991), 46, and Todd Hartch, *Missionaries of the State: The Summer Institute of*

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moment for Mexico's minority Protestant population. The government responded immediately with federal troops to protect Protestants, a marked contrast to the delayed reactions of Presidents Manuel Ávila Camacho (1940-1946) and Miguel Alemán Valdéz (1946-1952).[195] Ruiz Cortines's intervention meant that "the free hand that anti-Protestants had enjoyed for twelve years was finally being checked."[196] This action encouraged Protestant congregations to apply for more church permits since Ruiz Cortines's Ministry of the Interior office efficiently and often positively approved applications for new Protestant churches.[197] President Adolfo López Mateos (1958-1964) continued Cortines's protection of Protestantism by also intervening in cases of religious intolerance. Notably, López Mateos's wife, Eva Samano de López Mateos, a Methodist, took the lead in intervening in several religious intolerance cases around Mexico, including in Oaxaca.[198] As it will become more apparent in the examination of the SIL in Chapter Four, toleration of Protestantism dovetailed with López Mateos's agenda for modernizing rural Mexico through new social and educational programs.

Linguistics, State Formation, and Indigenous Mexico, 1935-1985 (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 77-79.

[195] Lindy Scott argues that Catholic-State relations improved ten-fold under the Ávila Camacho administration due to his un-Cardenista statement of "Soy un creyente" or "I am a believer." In other words, Catholicism came back in fashion after the 1920-1940 post revolutionary anticlericalism period. However, even though subsequent President Miguel Alemán's mother was a Presbyterian, Scott maintains that the Catholic Church experienced a further rebirth during Alemán's term. Despite Mexico's burgeoning Protestant population, Alemán did next to nothing in cases of religious intolerance. Scott, *Salt of the Earth,* 44-45. Of course, Ruiz Cortines's intervention against the Catholic factory workers can also be viewed as an example of the president's militant stance on union strikes in Mexico. See Kevin J. Middlebrook, *The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State and Authoritarianism in Mexico* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), especially chapter five, for an analysis of labor union repression in the late 1950s under Ruiz Cortines and especially during López Mateos's administration.

[196] Hartch, *Missionaries of the State,* 77.

[197] See Hartch, *Missionaries of the* State, 77-79, for more background on Ruiz Cortines's administration and religious tolerance.

[198] Scott, *Salt of the Earth,* 46.

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Mirroring the trend at the federal level, the Oaxacan government tolerated Protestant organizations as a means of modernizing and incorporating Oaxaca's sixteen distinct indigenous groupings. Despite these openings at the state and national levels, Oaxaca was riddled with religious conflicts. Many conflicts echoed the local criticism of Protestantism in Oaxaca that these new religions would divide and weaken indigenous communities. Tradition and communal adhesion outweighed minority religious rights. The friction between customary and constitutional law is apparent in many of these conflicts. In this chapter, I describe the different strategies Catholic majorities used to oppose Protestant incursion in the districts of Cuicatlán, Tlaxiaco, and Pochutla that emphasize the strength of local traditions over religious choice. Although articulated in contrasting ways, these cases demonstrate that opponents to Protestantism used collective rights to prohibit the penetration of Protestant missionaries, churches, and influence in predominantly Catholic communities. Local custom and regional identity were central to Catholic prioritization of collective rights in indigenous communities over the individual rights of Oaxacan Protestants. Despite the intervention of national Protestant organizations and the Federal government, religious conflict was still very much a local issue that reflected community power dynamics. At times, this collective rights' defense engaged Catholic and Protestant Oaxacans in complex and competing webs of articulations of indigenous and Mexican identities. Before reviewing these conflicts, it is important to further situate the arrival of Protestantism in Oaxaca.

While Baptist and Presbyterian missionaries canvassed the Oaxacan countryside in the late nineteenth century, it was the Methodists who established the first permanent

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church in Oaxaca.[199] Building upon the interest of the 1871 Oaxacan Evangelical Society, the Methodist Episcopal Church began evangelizing in the state in 1880.[200] Finally, by 1888 and with an almost complete railroad line between Mexico City and Oaxaca City, the Methodist Episcopal Church became the leading missionary organization in Oaxaca. That same year it purchased the former San Pablo convent property just one block over from the zócalo to establish their first permanent church in Oaxaca. Methodist missionary Lucius C. Smith described the state as "practically virgin soil" for evangelization.[201]

Reverend Smith toured remote areas of the state on horseback in the spring of 1892. The minister gushed: "As fast as men and means are furnished we intend, with God's blessing, to spread the Gospel to the thousand villages that nestle among the glorious mountains of Oaxaca. The people there greatly need the Gospel we have. Should we not give it to them?"[202] Nicknamed the "John Wesley" of Oaxaca for his frequent circuit-riding, Smith was particularly drawn to the district of Cuicatlán.[203] Located along the railroad line in the Cañada region of northern Oaxaca, Cuicatlán was a logical base for Smith to begin his evangelization of Mazatecan Indians. While Cuicatlán was primarily indigenous, there was also a small pocket of mestizos as well as U.S. and British businessmen, who were often Protestants themselves, coming through the area.[204]

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[199] See Apolonio Vázquez, *Los que sembraron con lágrimas. Apuntes históricos del presbiterianismo en México* (México, DF: El Faro, 1985), for the historical background of Presbyterianism in Mexico.

[200] Lucias C. Smith, "Our Mission in Oaxaca," Eugene R. Smith ed., *The Gospel in all Lands,* (Methodist Episcopal Church, 1894), 252.

[201] Smith, "Our Mission in Oaxaca," 252.

[202] Ibid.

[203] John Fletcher Hurst, *The History of Methodism* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1904), 199.

[204] See Jean-Pierre Bastian, *Los disidentes: sociedades protestantes y revolución en México, 1872-1911* (México, DF.: Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1989) for a discussion of the link between railroad stations and Protestant churches. Frederick Starr narrated his 1899 railroad journey from Tehuacán, Puebla

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Smith reported in 1892 that he had sold five subscriptions to the Methodist Church's *El Abogado Cristiano* weekly bulletin and made arrangements to preach there every two weeks when he made his rounds of the district.

However, beginning in the late 1890s with the continued clashes between Liberals and Conservatives in the Oaxacan Sierra and then the Mexican 1910 Revolution, the Methodist Episcopal Church pulled its missionaries out of Oaxaca. The post-revolutionary period offered an important but still challenging opportunity for Protestant evangelization. Methodist and Presbyterian missionaries swapped geographic regions in 1914 in an agreement called the "Plan de Cincinnati." By the final years of the Revolution, it was the Presbyterian Church who had missionary jurisdiction over Oaxaca while the Methodists moved to northern Mexico.[205] The Methodist Church of San Pablo became the Presbyterian Church's San Pablo as it still is today.

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to Cuicatlán in *In Indian Mexico: A Narrative of Travel and Labor* (Chicago: Forbes & Company, 1908). See especially pages 259-271 for Starr's stereotypical 'indigenous physical type' genre photographs and his rich descriptions of Mazatecan, Cuicatec, and Chinantec villages in the district.

[205] See Daniel James 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* (University of Texas, El Paso, Master's Thesis, January 2006) for the national implications of the Plan and the lack of agency given to Mexican Presbyterian or Methodist ministers in the 1914 meetings.

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Figure 8 Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana "San Pablo," Oaxaca City. Photo: Kathleen McIntyre

El Divino Pastor, Cuicatlán

A religious conflict in Cuicatlán provides a compelling example of the contested nature of religious spaces in Oaxacan indigenous communities. Located in the Cañada region of northern Oaxaca, Cuicatlán has a long history of Protestantism stretching back to the 1890s. Yet obtaining the construction permit for the "El Divino Pastor" National Presbyterian Church took over ten years. In this conflict, the National Evangelical Defense Committee, Presbyterian ministers in Oaxaca City, and local congregants united to advocate for the church but not before meeting stiff resistance at the local level.

The conflict began on May 12, 1958, when a group of 150 Catholics crowded into the municipal president's office and stated that they would not permit Cuicatlán to open

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itself to other religions.[206] Catholic Arturo Rivera asked the municipal authorities to conduct an *asamblea* (public meeting) to determine if a Protestant church should be built. The municipal president forwarded the Catholics' statement to the Governor's office along with a photograph of the Catholics gathered in the main plaza of Villa de Cuicatlán, ostensibly to demonstrate the large crowd of Catholics complaining (figure 2).

Figure 9: Cuicatlán Catholics, May 12, 1958. Source: AGEPEO

In this example, Catholic resistance to Protestantism revolved around regional norms superseding guarantees for individuals' Constitutional rights. The Cuicatlán Catholics stated in their letter to Governor Alfonso Pérez Gasca: "While it is certain that

[206] Ricardo Armas Pacheco, Minister of Justice, Cuicatlán to Governor Alfonso Pérez Gasca, 15

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in Mexico there is freedom of religion of one's choosing, but in places like here where passions ignite and degenerate into violent acts, you should consider the importance of public peace."[207] The Catholic petitioners recognized that their disapproval of the church's construction might violate the individual rights of their neighbors. However, they argued that the guarantees of the Constitution did not coincide with local realities where Catholics were the majority. To bolster their position, the Catholics also gave examples of Protestant-Catholic clashes in neighboring villages that erupted into serious conflicts the previous year.[208]

Cuicatlán Presbyterians adeptly used their Protestant connections in Oaxaca City and Mexico City to effectively criticize the Oaxacan state government's slow response. On August 27, 1958, the CONEDEF wrote a letter to Governor Pérez Gasca (1956-1962) wherein Comité President Agapito Ramos Ramírez demanded that the governor investigate the permit delays for El Divino Pastor Church. Ramos Ramírez conveyed that the approval process had gone smoothly in Mexico City, but the Comité was concerned about the failed permit approval implementation in Oaxaca. Ramos Ramírez insinuated that he knew that the Ministry of the Interior's office had already approved the permit application and that it was the Oaxacan state and local government that stood in the way of the Presbyterian Church's opening.[209] In order to follow religious worship laws

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May, 1958. 4/149 (3) "58"/1083, AGEPEO.

[207]Arturo Rivera, et al., to Governor Pérez Gasca, 3 May 1958, 1/149 (3) "58"/1083, AGEPEO. Original Spanish: "Bien es cierto que en la República existe el derecho de profesar la religión que se quiera, pero en lugares como este en que las pasiones encienden y degeneran en hechos delictuosos debe verse también la conveniencia de conservar la paz pública, y por lo mismo no sería posible que se concediera aquí, el permiso para el nuevo templo."

[208] Rivera, et al., to Governor Pérez Gasca, 21 May 1958, AGEPEO, 4/149 (3) "58" 1083.

[209] Agapito Ramos Ramírez, letter to Governor Pérez Gasca, 27 August, 1958, AGEPEO. Original Spanish: "La Secretaría de Gobernación mandó a usted un oficio el 27 de Mayo del presente año, cuyo

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properly, the Presbyterians needed a stamp of approval from the state government, who in turn relied on local authorities to report on whether the proposed church adhered to the federal religious association property guidelines. The following month, Cuicatlán Public Justice Minister Enrique Sánchez advised the governor's office: "My belief is that the Protestant Church should not be built; the Evangelicals should continue worshiping in a private home, that way any disturbances would be avoided…these conflicts can lead to bloodbaths."[210] Despite the federal approval, local authorities agreed with Catholics in Cuicatlán that the Presbyterian Church should not open. Another agent from Cuicatlán's Ministry of Justice office, Ricardo Pacheco Armas, worried that animosity between Protestants and Catholics would erupt in violence such as had occurred in the neighboring community of San José del Chilar that same year.[211] Instead, Pacheco Armas advised that they hold off on granting the permit until the "passions of the fanatical" subsided.[212]

The Mexican Ministry of the Interior's office fielded constant complaints and pressure from CONEDEF and Oaxacan Presbyterian ministers to intervene in Cuicatlán.

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número de registro es el 02605, pidiendo el informe correspondiente y como hasta la fecha la Sría. de Gobernación solamente está esperando el informe de usted, encaremos de una manera muy atenta tenga la bondad de ordenar a quien corresponda mande este informe para que estos asuntos lleguen a su fin y podamos estar dentro de la ley."

[210] Enrique Sánchez to Oaxacan Secretary of State, 15 September, 1958. 4/149 (3) "58"/1083, AGEPEO. Original Spanish: "En concepto mío, salvo el muy respetable parecer de esa Superioridad, los evangelistas pueden continuar como antes, celebrando sus ritos en una casa particular y de este modo se evitan disturbios que pueden degenerar en tragedias sangrientas que no tienen razón de ser, ya que el número de católicos es excesivamente superior a estos."

[211] Public Justice Minister Pacheco Armas to Attorney General Jesús Rojas Villavicencio, May 2, 1961. 2/343 (17) 76, AGEPEO. Original Spanish "Aún persiste determinada agitación, porque el Presidente Municipal [de San José Chilar], es Evangelista y Gobierna de manera parcial."

[212] Public Justice Minister Pacheco Armas to Attorney General Jesús Rojas Villavicencio, June 23, 1961, 2/343 (17) 76, AGEPEO. "Opino, salvo el mejor parecer de esa Superioridad, que continúe aplazándose la resolución del caso para evitar un nuevo clímax de agitación de los fanáticos de esta Cabecera."

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By November 16, 1960, Mexico City's Ministry of the Interior office pressured Governor Pérez Gasca to move on the case. General Director of the Ministry of the Interior's office Tristan Canales Valverde reminded Governor Pérez Gasca that the case had been going on for two years. Pérez Gasca's office responded quickly to the Presbyterians' complaints when prodded by federal officials like Canales Valverde. Nevertheless, in 1962, the local Cuicatlán public ministers rejected the permit application. Despite federal and state approvals, local authorities took matters into their own hands to maintain peace and protect local traditions.

Like CONEDEF, the central Oaxaca City Presbyterian Church intervened when their Cuicatlán congregants did not receive the permit to build their church. Presbyterian Ministers Epifanio Contreras and Sául Velasco complained to Oaxacan Governor Rodolfo Brena Torres (1962-1968) that the state government was doing little to move forward the approval of the permit for their temple. On August 21, 1964, the ministers wrote to Mexico City and Oaxaca City government officials reminding them that the Presbyterian Church had operated since 1914 in the district of Cuicatlán without disturbances and in full accordance with religious conduct regulations as stipulated in the Mexican Constitution.[213] They reminded the governor that the federal government's Ministry of the Interior's office backed their request but was still waiting to hear back from the state office about the permit application. The ministers also threatened to appeal for assistance to the First Lady, Eva Sámano de López Mateos, who had publicly

[213] Methodists had actually worked in Cuicatlán since the 1890s but, due to the implementation of the Cincinnati Plan in 1914, the Presbyterians received missions in southern Mexico and the Methodists took the north. See Vázquez, *Los que sembraron con lágrimas,* 238-239, for a summary of which Presbyterian missionaries arrived to Oaxaca beginning in 1920.

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intervened in cases of Protestant persecution throughout Mexico.[214] The Oaxaca City-based Presbyterian Church ministers indicated their understanding of constitutional law and experience utilizing federal agencies and powerful individuals to help advance their causes.

The Presbyterians in Cuicatlán mounted evidence in favor of their church by documenting the long history of Protestantism in their community. In a collective letter to Governor Brena Torres, they stated that Protestants had operated in their district since 1890. Their letter mentioned the Protestant primary school in Cuicatlán that operated from 1900 until 1915, a school recognized by the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP/Ministry of Public Education).[215] Several elderly Cuicatecos also sent the governor testimonial statements on the educational benefits they had received from the Presbyterian school.[216] The early Methodist/Presbyterian missionaries had offered literacy classes and published Spanish-Mazatecan language dictionaries. The Evangelical presence in their town, they argued, far from harming the community, had actually brought cultural advantages to Cuicatlán.[217] The Cuicatlán Protestants closed the letter by reminding Governor Pérez Gasca that they had followed the protocol for establishing a new church, but it still had not opened due to local opposition.

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[214] Presbyterian Church Ministers Epifanio Contreras, Saúl Velasco, Luís Rosa Torres, and Samuel Vásquez, letter to Governor Rodolfo Brena Torres, 21 August 1964, AGEPEO, Característica #136, Expediente: 160, 1958-1964. Original Spanish: “Como a usted consta la esposa del señor Presidente, en atención a la injusticia que se cometió ha ofrecido prestarnos hasta donde le sea posible su cooperación.”

[215] Presbyterian leader José Ponce Hernández, letter to Governor Brena Torres, 22 April 1961, AGEPEO, Box #136, File #160, 1958-1964.

[216] José Espina Sánchez, et al., “Carta de Testimonio,” 24 April 1961, Cuicatlán, Oaxaca, AGEPEO. Original Spanish: “Hacemos constar por medio de la presente que fuimos instruidos y educados en una Escuela Evangélica que funciono en los anos de 1900 a 1915…Nosotros hacemos constar los beneficios que de ella recibimos en nuestra infancia.”

[217] José Ponce Hernández, et al., Presbyterian collective letter to Governor Pérez Gasca, 22 April 1961, AGEPEO.

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Whole Cuicatlán families had converted to Protestantism in the late nineteenth century; many were baptized as Protestants and had attended a Presbyterian school while others had organized Bible studies for decades. Now they wanted their own church. In this case, the Cuicatlán Presbyterians framed their argument historically: Protestants had operated in the district since the 1890s. They effectively countered the Catholics' argument that they were outsiders to the region or that their congregations were made up of foreigners.

In contrast, Catholics drew a connection between the growth of Protestant churches and North American influence in Mexico.[218] On June 8, 1964, a group of Catholics presented another petition in protest of the Presbyterians' construction plans. In the petition, they bluntly stated that Protestants made up just a small percentage of the village population. "The density of the population of our *cabecera* (municipal seat) is about four thousand inhabitants and as it is well known, the Evangelicals do not even number twenty individuals."[219] The Catholics argued that the new church would not be financially supported by the handful of Protestants in Cuicatlán but rather by the "Colossus of the North" and "fortified by Yankee gold." Furthermore, the Catholics complained that the Presbyterians were using Cuicatlán as a launching point for

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[218] For studies on the link between north American imperialism and Protestantism, see Gloria Pérez and Scott S. Robinson, *La misión detras de la misión* (México, D.F.: Centro de Estudios Económicos y Sociales del Tercer mundo, 1983), and Gerald Colby and Charlotte Dennett, *Thy Will be Done: The Conquest of the Amazon: Nelson Rockefeller and Evangelism in the Age of Oil* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996).

[219]Arturo Rivera, et al., to Cuicatlán Municipal Mayor, 8 June, 1964, 4/143.1 (3) "63"/1920, AGEPEO. Original Spanish: "La densidad de población de nuestra Cabecera, en números redondos, es de más o menos de CUATRO MIL HABITANTES, y de este número, como es bien sabido, no llegan a veinte los elementos de la secta protestante que radican en esta población."

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"proselytizing their beliefs in this village and in all of the towns of our district."[220] They argued that Protestantism threatened Mexican nationalism and, at the same time, hurt local identity and norms.

Community resistance to Protestantism described a regional and national identity that had no room for the new religion. The petitioners accused North American Protestants of "playing a Machiavellian divide and conquer game with Mexico."[221] The Catholics argued that Protestants were "unraveling our customs…changing our language so that it erases our nationality. The heart of our nationality is based in these three inseparable pillars: LANGUAGE, RELIGION AND OUR CUSTOMS."[222] The petitioners closed by asking the municipal president to inform state government officials about the incompatibility of these divisive "sects" in their district. The petitioners cited national heroes such as 1810 Independence leader Ignacio Allende as a symbol of Mexican nationality who fought against imperialism. By citing the heroes of Mexican Independence, the petitioners linked opposition to Protestantism with resistance to European colonialism; Protestantism was anathema to Mexican sovereignty. Protestants used the reverse argument to criticize Catholicism in Mexico; Catholics were loyal to

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[220] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Ese nuevo templo protestante que esa secta pretende abrir a su culto con fines de propagar su credo en esta Villa y en todos los pueblos de nuestro Distrito, como es público y notorio, no va a ser costeado por los cuantos protestantes de aquí, sino por elementos de afuera fomentados estos con el oro del imperialismo yanqui, del cual solo son instrumento los protestantes de aquí y de afuera."

[221] Ibid. Original Spanish: "'Divide y Vencerás' es la consigna Maquiavélica, y es el juego que hace al imperialismo la secta protestante."

[222] Original Spanish: "La Corazón de nuestra nacionalidad esta fincada en estos tres pilares que deben mantenerse incólumes: EL IDIOMA, LA RELIGION, y NUESTRAS COSTUMBRES. El protestante por el solo hecho de su credo, es público y notorio, que desecha nuestras costumbres y solo le resta cambiar de idioma para que reniegue de nuestra nacionalidad." Rivera, et al., to Cuicatlán Municipal Mayor, 8 June, 1964. AGEPEO, 4/143.1(3) "63"/1920.

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Rome, not the nation.[223] The Catholic and Presbyterian contrasting assertions suggest a conceptualization of Mexican national as well as local identity.

On August 24, 1964, the Oaxacan state office finally approved the Presbyterians' new church.[224] The Oaxacan state government informed Tristan Canales Valverde, General Director of the Ministry of the Interior's office, that in agreement with the Governor of Oaxaca, it was appropriate to authorize Contreras and Hernández and the other residents of Cuicatlán to open the new National Presbyterian Church. In his letter authorizing the church to open in Cuicatlán, Oaxacan Secretary General Rubén Pérez Peña reminded Catholic leaders in Cuicatlán that, despite their ongoing protest, the Presbyterian Church was approved. Additionally, in the letter, Pérez Peña reminded Catholic protesters Adrián Zavala Ramírez, Gregorio Oropeza Carrera, and Alberto Mendoza Roque that Article 24 of the Mexican Constitution guaranteed all Mexicans the right to worship freely, not just Catholics.[225]

Yet, in spite of the state and federal approvals, "El Divino Pastor" did not open until 1968.[226] The case illustrates the intersection of Evangelical Defense Movements,

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[223] For early post-revolutionary Protestant critiques of Catholicism, see Adrian Bantjes, "Idolatry and Iconoclasm in Revolutionary Mexico" in *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos,* 13:1 (Winter, 1997), 87-120, and Webster E. Browning, *Roman Christianity in Latin America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1924).

[224] Letter from Oaxaca City Secretary General Cutberto Chagoya to Tristan Canales Valverde in the Ministry of the Interior's office in Mexico City, 24 August, 1964. 4/143.1 (3) "63"/1920, AGEPEO.

[225] Rubén Pérez Peña to Adrian Zavala Ramírez, Gregorio Oropeza Carrera, and Alberto Mendoza Roque, 19 March 1965, Cuicatlán, 2/343(17)76, AGEPEO. Political Constitution of the United Mexican States, 1917, Article 24, as translated into English: "Every man is free to pursue the religious belief that best suits him, and to practice its ceremonies, devotions or cults, as long as they do not constitute a crime. Congress cannot dictate laws that establish or abolish any given religion. Ordinarily, all religious acts will be practiced in temples, and those that extraordinarily are practiced outside temples must adhere to law."

[226] Oaxacan sub-Secretary of State Guillermo Martínez León finally sent the official permit with Cuicatlán Mayor José Villacanas Linares's approval signature to Cuicatlán Presbyterian leaders Joel Ponce Hernández and Emiliano M. Brena González on 1 July, 1968.

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state and federal government, patriotism, and the issue of individual vs. collective rights. It also shows the deep complexity of Protestantism in insular indigenous villages. Furthermore, it demonstrates the persistence of local law over constitutional law as it took a decade before the Church in Cuicatlán could officially open. This case also provides insight into the state and federal bureaucratic red tape that Protestants faced when trying to open a church. Ultimately, with the assistance of organized Protestant organizations, constitutional law prevailed over customary laws**.**

Coyula

Protestants contested Catholic definitions of religious space and town obligations. They used an increasingly sophisticated national and transitional network in fighting for their religious identity and individual rights as protected in the 1917 Mexican Constitution. The coastal Zapotec town of Coyula illustrates the role of a united Mexican Evangelical movement intervening in local religious conflicts in Oaxaca. This example supports my assertion that having key backing from national organizations bolstered Protestants' complaints of religious intolerance.

The Coyula conflict began in early May 1960 when a large contingent from *Acción Católica* (Catholic Action), led by the wives of the Municipal officials, showed up at Protestant Fortunata Martínez's home and threatened her with physical assault for having hosted a luncheon for out-of- town evangelicals in her home. The Catholic women advised her to pack up her possessions and leave town immediately if she did not want trouble. In response, Martínez filed a complaint at the district office for violation of her Constitutional rights. Additionally, Martínez contacted Felipe Sánchez Muñiz, Elder Director of the Interdenominational Christian Church in Mexico City, who in turn

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demanded a legal investigation into the matter by Oaxaca City and Mexico City government officials.[227]

Similar to the Presbyterian case in Cuicatlán, Sánchez Muñiz disputed the common Catholic assertion that Protestants were outside agents of American imperialism. He implored the governor: "I am begging you, Mr. Governor, that you permit our Evangelical Brothers and Sisters to enjoy the guarantees of the Mexican Constitution that they deserve and that you instruct the aforementioned people to respect the Constitutional guarantees of these Brothers. Order them not to expel the Evangelicals from the town, a place they have lived in for many, many years."[228] By grounding his description of the Coyulan Protestants as native-born residents of a community and not foreign residents, Sánchez Muñiz challenged the municipal authorities' argument that Evangelicals were always foreigners**.** The Pastor stressed that Protestantism was a religious choice for indigenous peoples, not a religion imposed and controlled by outsiders.

More importantly, Elder Sánchez Muñiz's letter came to the attention of the National Evangelical Defense Committee and inspired a national movement to protect evangelical rights and contest Catholic narratives of community space. Throughout the last week of May 1960, evangelical churches and committees all over Mexico and in parts of the U.S. Southwest sent telegrams to Governor Pérez Gasca protesting Fortunata

[227] Felipe Sánchez Muñiz, Elder Director of Iglesia Cristiana Interdenominacional, letter to Governor Brena Torres, 18 May 1960, 4/143.0 (16) "60"/1634, AGEPEO.

[228] Felipe Sánchez Muñiz letter to Gov. Pérez Gasca, 18 May 1960, AGEPEO. Original Spanish: "Estoy suplicando a UD., Señor Gobernador, sea muy servido en girar sus instrucciones o fin de que se permita a nuestros hermanos en la fé, gozar de las garantías que la Constitución General de la República les concede y para que gire sus instrucciones a fin de que las personas mencionadas sean las que impartan garantías a nuestros hermanos y no las que los obliguen a retirar se del pueblo donde están establecidos desde hace muchos años."

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Martínez's expulsion. Most telegrams asked the Oaxacan Governor to intervene in Coyula and were signed by a specific Evangelical church, suggesting an organized campaign that included form letters. A typical letter dated May 25, 1960, from Tampico, Tamaulipas, stated: "The Iglesia Cristiana Interdenominacional respectfully but vehemently protests the lack of rights our Christian brothers in Oaxaca are experiencing. Please guarantee their rights." Not all of the churches conformed to form letters; some made more strident statements in recognizing the global perspective of religious freedom. For example, Timoteo Ortega López represented Protestant churches in Nuevo León in his May 31, 1960, telegram addressed to Governor Pérez Gasca: "The Churches of Monterrey demand justice for the Evangelicals in the town of Coyula, Pochutla. We ask you to remember Article Eighteen of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."[229] On June 2, 1960, the Iglesia Evangélica de San Migual Tianguisolco requested an investigation "for the damages and humiliations suffered by the members of the Iglesia Evangélica of Coyula, Pochutla at the hands of the Catholics." These examples suggest a united Evangelical movement that, with modern technology, was able to quickly find out about and protest an alleged example of repression in the nation's remote areas. Through CONEDEF's communicative alerts, they were able to swiftly organize and substantiate their demands with an advanced understanding of constitutional law.

Due to CONEDEF's campaign, Oaxacan Sub-Secretary Martínez León reported to the Oaxacan Attorney General that his office was inundated with telegrams from

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[229] Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948). "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." http://www.udhr.org/UDHR/udhr.HTM#18, accessed July 6, 2012. Original Spanish: "La Iglesia de Monterrey pide justicia para el pueblo evangélico de Coyula

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churches in Veracruz, Puebla, Tlaxcala, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas soliciting guarantees for the Evangelical residents in Coyula. He recommended that the state government rapidly look into the case, as it was attracting much attention in Protestants churches throughout Mexico.[230] Martínez León preferred that the Attorney General's office handle it directly and find a solution since the local Pochutla Ministry of Justice's office had not returned his messages.[231] The tone of Martínez León's letter hinted his frustration with the extra work the Coyula conflict caused his office; in one day they received thirty-two protest telegrams. The state government finally did intervene the following month. On July 8, 1960, Martínez León informed the Municipal President José Ortiz that he had received numerous complaints about the "unlawful attitude" of the Coyula local government, which consistently turned a blind eye towards violence against Evangelicals. Martínez León reminded the town president that, as the representative of justice in his community, he should take the time to study the Mexican Constitution. [232] If the conflict persisted and Fortunata Martínez was not allowed back into the community, the Governor would send in the state police to protect the rights of Coyulan Protestants. In this case, CONEDEF's press campaign worked; national and state officials threatened

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Pochutla, Pongo a su consideración articulo 18 Declaración Universal de Derechos Humanos." Timeoteo Ortega López to Oaxacan Governor, May 31, 1960. *Telégrafos Nacionales de México.*

[230] Guillermo Martínez León to Attorney General, Oaxaca, 2 June 1960, 4/143.0 (16) "60"/1639, AGEPEO. Original Spanish: "Numerosos telegramas se han estados recibiendo en este Gobierno procedentes de varios pueblos de Veracruz, Puebla, Tlaxcala, Nuevo León y Tamaulipas en los que solicitan garantías para los Evangélicos que radican en Coyula del distrito del Pochutla de este Estado."

[231] Ibid. Original Spanish: "En vista de que hasta la fecha no se tiene ninguna contestación, por acuerdo del C. Gobernador Constitucional de Estado se encarece la intervención de usted, a fin de que se aclare a que se deben estas quejas." AGEPEO.

[232] Guillermo Martínez León to Oaxacan State Attorney General, 2 June 1960, AGEPEO 4/143.0 (16) "60"/1639. Martínez León pasted the full content of Article 24 into the text of his letter to the Municipal mayor of Coyula: "Everyone is free to profess the religious beliefs of his choice and free to practice the ceremonies, devotions or religious acts of worship, in the churches or in the private home, as

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to intervene in local communities if they did not uphold federal guarantees of religious freedom.

The extant documents on Coyula end here. We do not know whether Martínez returned to the community, though the firm response of the Oaxacan state administration suggests pressure from the top to respect individual rights and solve the conflict in favor of the Protestants. The Mexican Protestants' organized and widespread response to Martínez's case suggests the vigor with which they challenged Catholic community leaders' portrayal of them as outsiders. Instead, Protestants wrapped themselves in the Mexican Constitution, suggesting its long-term ramifications in local communities unprepared and sometimes unwilling to accept nationally guaranteed rights when these rights interfered with traditional notions of religious and community space. In this case, as in many of the conflict cases, the Oaxacan state government struggled with supporting federal laws at the local level. Many communities cared little about the stipulations of the 1917 Constitution's Article 24, which proclaimed freedom of religion in Mexico, if they had even read the Constitution. These local authorities knew what legal codes had worked in their communities for centuries and were reluctant to change time-honored practices. They did not refuse to acknowledge their identity or responsibilities as Mexican citizens but rather had a long history of negotiating with the colonial and then Mexican government and fighting to retain some of their traditions and political organizations.

This case also illustrates the importance of technology, such as telegrams, in organizing Evangelical Oaxacans. Mobilizing through outside networking are key

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long as it doesn't constitute a crime or disrespect of the law. All acts of public religious worship should be

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resources for the success of social movements.[233] Once CONEDEF became involved, hundreds of protest telegrams from different Mexican Protestant churches poured into the Oaxacan governor's office as well as the to the Ministry of the Interior's office in Mexico City. Fortunata Martínez's expulsion became a rallying call for Protestants throughout Mexico.

The Defense Committee's work was not limited to Cuicatlán or Coyula. Between 1957 and 1960, CONEDEF intervened in twelve conflicts in Oaxaca.[234] CONEDEF's process in highlighting a case of intolerance started with a direct letter written to the local municipal president reminding him of the religious freedom guaranteed in Article 24. In fact, the organization's very own letterhead included in its margin the full text of Article 24. The notice was usually copied to a local Protestant leader and the state governor's office. In each letter addressed to the municipal authorities, CONEDEF reminded the mayor that it was, for example, illegal to threaten to cut off Protestants' water or electricity if the Protestants chose not to pay toward a fiesta or contribute labor to a tequio assignment. If a particular case did not get addressed right away, CONEDEF used Mexico City government officials to pressure the Oaxacan governor's office.

In one prolonged conflict in the Juchitán municipality along the Zapotec isthmus, CONEDEF president Agapito Ramos Ramírez followed up on a case in the village of Santa María del Mar in which an evangelical minority group refused to donate funds

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celebrated precisely within the churches which will always be under the vigilance of the authorities."

[233] Pastor Jaime García, interview with author, March 15, 2010. García mentioned the arrival of telegraph lines in rural Oaxaca as essential in uniting Protestants. For the foundational literature on social movement theory, consult Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

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toward the annual fiesta. As a result, the evangelicals were fined and their animals were denied access to communal grazing land, causing one bull to die. In response to *hermano* Narcisco Toledo's incarceration for not supporting Catholic rituals, Ramos Ramírez stated in a March 27, 1957, letter to town mayor Cándido Ramírez: "In a respectful but energetic manner I ask you, Mr. Mayor, to address these anomalies and suggest that you use your influence in this serious situation in a village of our beloved Homeland. If this does not happen, we will regretfully have to resort to higher powers to make sure you rectify the situation."[235]

Frustrated with the local government's failure to act, CONEDEF sought the intervention of the state government. On June 8, 1957, Agapito Ramos Ramírez wrote to Oaxacan Governor Pérez Gasca that the municipal government of Santa María del Mar "persisted in its hostile attitude toward evangelicals."[236] Ramos Ramírez reported that his attempts at mediation with Santa María del Mar municipal authorities was futile since the mayor "has declared that no one else but he is in charge, and so accordingly he has continued his abuse of individuals' Constitutional rights."[237] Ramos Ramírez went on to protest to Governor Pérez Gasca the flagrant violations of religious freedom in Mexico

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[234] "Asuntos relativos del Comité Nacional Evangélico de Defensa," 1957-1960, 1/140 "57"/1192, AGEPEO.

[235] Agapito Ramos Ramírez to Cándido Ramírez, Santa María del Mar, Juchitán, March 27, 1957, "Asuntos relativos del Comité Nacional Evangélico de Defensa," 1/140 "57"/1192, AGEPEO. Original Spanish: "De una manera respetuosa pero enérgica, señor Presidente, protestamos por todas estas anomalías y esperamos que usted ponga su influencia para que termine tan pesada situación en un pueblo de nuestra amada Patria, pues de lo contrario tendríamos la penosa necesidad de recurrir a autoridades superiores para que pongan los puntos sobre las íes."

[236] Ibid. Original Spanish: "El citado Agente Municipal de Santa María del Mar ha persistido en su actitud hostil para quienes profesan la religión evangélica…"

[237] Ibid. Original Spanish: "El propio Agente Municipal ha declarado que en aquel Pueblo nadie manda más que él, y en esta virtud ha continuado sus atropellos a los derechos constitucionales, sin consideración de ninguna especie."

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that Cándido Ramírez and his co-authorities were guilty of in Santa María del Mar. Later that month, the Sub-Secretary of State Government, Guillermo Martínez León, sent a copy of the governor's office memo ordering the Public Ministry of Justice to investigate the allegations against the Santa María del Mar municipal president.[238] By subordinating the Church to the state, Article 24 of the Mexican Constitution insured the authority of secular, not Catholic, authority in government. CONEDEF advocated for a stronger secular state.

CONEDEF effectively used the press to draw national awareness to abuses committed against Protestant Mexicans. Beginning in 1950, it requested and often received meetings with Mexican presidents to discuss cases of religious persecution.[239] CONEDEF also authored a column in the newsweekly *Tiempo,* a magazine founded by Mexican novelist and *El Universal* correspondent Martín Luis Guzmán in 1942. The column reported on Protestant news throughout Mexico including gruesome photographs of religious violence victims and direct passages from CONEDEF's public speeches and organizational literature. Guzmán himself often wrote editorials on Catholic "fanaticism" in Mexico including his criticism of the Church's opposition to some public school curricula.[240]

CONEDEF framed itself as a Mexican civic organization: patriotic, well versed in constitutional law, and in contact with key political figures in its defense of Mexican

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[238] Guillermo Martínez León to Agapito Ramos Ramírez, 20 June 1957, AGEPEO 4/140 "57"/1192.

[239] Jael de la Luz García, "Entre el escenario público y privado: la participación cívico-política de los evangélicos mexicanos, 1944-1951," in *Libertades Laicas,* 13.

[240] Guzmán vociferously spoke out against Catholic Parents Associations who annually protested government textbooks produced for primary schools. Catholic groups opposed the treatment of the Church in lessons on the Mexican Revolution. See Paul P. Kennedy, "Mexico Winning Textbook Fight," in *New York Times,* March 12, 1963.

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evangelicals in the press. From 1948 to this day, the organization remains in its same Mexico City location, ironically on the historic downtown avenue Isabel la Católica, named for the Spanish queen who sought to claim the "New World" for Catholicism. CONEDEF's biggest event is its annual Benito Juárez holiday rally against religious persecution of Protestants, again tying its civic and religious identity to the famous Mexican president who, while Chief Justice of the Mexican Supreme Court, precipitated the Liberal-Conservative clash The War of the Reform (1858-1861) over his determination to curb the Catholic Church's privileges (figure 3).

Figure 10. On-line poster advertising CONEDEF's Benito Juárez Day Rally in Mexico City on March 21, 2011. Source: *Noticiero Milamex*, March 18, 2011.

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Santa María Texcatitlán

The Santa María Texcatitlán case in the Cuicatlán district further illustrates the friction between national and local law. However, this case is somewhat different in nature because it involves a newer, non-mainline Protestant organization not represented by CONEDEF. While Chapter Five focuses more on non-mainline Protestant groups, this section will briefly discuss one of the earliest Adventist conflicts in Oaxaca.

In the municipality of Santa María Texcatitlán, a group of Seven Day Adventists formed a congregation in 1960. During their services, they accompanied religious hymns with music blasting from their speakers, often on weekdays. Local authorities declared Adventists' loud music a public nuisance. The exasperated Texcatitlán mayor Feliciano Hernández Jiménez described the Adventists as "worshiping and singing hymns all day and all night."[241] On February 10, 1963, Hernández Jiménez wrote a letter to Governor Brena Torres complaining that Adventist leader Antonio Serrano Rivas had been illegally passing out Protestant "propaganda" since 1960 and now had ten families following his "*secta*."[242] He said that Serrano Rivas and fellow Evangelical Pablo Castillo were "leading the majority of the town astray so that with time, they're going to dissolve the

[241] Feliciano Hernández Jiménez letter to Guillermo Martínez León, Oaxacan sub-Secretary of state, 11 March 1963, 4/143.1(3) "63"/300, AGEPEO. Original Spanish: "Los meses pasados hacían sus cultos de día y noche cantando himnos acompañados con dos guitarras en casa del señor Andrés Serrano Rivas, casa que servía como templo provisional y a partir del primero de Marzo, dichas reuniones evangélicas lo hacen en casa del señor Pablo Castillo, casa provisional que a la fecha no cuentan con casa definitiva. "

[242] Hernández Jiménez letter to Martínez León, 10 February 1963, 4/143.1(3) "63"/292, AGEPEO. Original Spanish: "Desde 1960 el señor José Serrano vecino de este lugar comenzó a propagar la secta Evangélica sin que para ello tenga el permiso respectivo, pues a la fecha son ya diez familias que profesan esa secta y celebran sus reuniones en la casa del señor Andrés Serrano."

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social organization of the town."[243] Hernández Jiménez asserted that the men did not have official permission to celebrate evangelical services in town, and he intended to charge them if they did not stop their worship sessions.

His letter points to the friction between local customs and constitutional law. Hernández Jiménez complained that the evangelical men did not respect his authority. He said of the Protestant leaders: "No one can stop them, not even myself, the town president, or the state government because they only care about the [Mexican] Political Constitution, and for no reason will they stop following their religion."[244] He closed by saying that, in his town, there were over one thousand Catholics, constituting "the absolute majority," in contrast to the handful of Protestants.[245] Again, majority rights outweighed minority religious rights in the mind of the municipal president.

Besides complaining about their proclivity for loud music, town authorities stated that Seventh Day Adventists refused to cooperate with community obligations such as tequio. In a letter to the Oaxacan Secretary General's office, Hernández Jiménez described that, in addition to confusing town residents with their attacks on the Catholic Church and by not respecting local authorities, the Adventists refused to fulfill town council's cargos. "They do not show up to give labor for public works that benefit the whole community; they also convince local parents not to send their children to public

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[243] Hernández Jiménez to Martínez León, 11 March 1965, 4/143.1(3) "63"/239, AGEPEO. Original Spanish: "Son los que siguen con esta secta desorientando la mayor parte de los ciudadanos paraqué con el tiempo se llegue a disolver la solución social de la población."

[244] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Y que nadie les puede impedir si yo como Autoridad ni el superior Gobierno, sino ellos se basan a la Constitución Política, y por ningún motivo dejarán de seguir con su religión."

[245] Hernández Jiménez letter to Martínez León, 10 February 1963, 4/143.1(3) "63"/292, AGEPEO. Original Spanish: "Y siendo pues mayoría absoluta…"

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school; instead their children attend the biblical schools, which they desecrate."[246] Hernández Jiménez closed his letter by pleading with the Secretary General's Office to deny the Adventists permission to open their church. The mayor argued that the only way that the town could go back to its tranquil disposition would be if the Adventists stopped their services.[247] The Adventist congregations were particularly controversial in Oaxacan towns because Adventists did not work on Saturdays.[248] Most tequio projects took place on Saturdays, their day of worship, which meant the Adventists refused to participate.

For their part, on March 31, 1964, the Adventists wrote a letter to the Oaxacan Attorney General that was passed first to Governor Rodolfo Brena Torres and then to the Ministry of the Interior office in Mexico City. The Adventist men complained that they were victims of Catholic persecution. Antonio Serrano, the Adventist leader, stated that the residents who opposed them in town utilized "religion as a powerful, invincible weapon to continuously fight us."[249] Serrano further claimed that Adventist children were

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[246] Feliciano Hernández Jiménez to Sub-Secretary of State Guillermo Martínez León, 11 March 1965, 4/143.1(3) "63"/239, AGEPEO. Original Spanish: "No quieren desempeñar los cargos concejiles del Municipio, reúsan en no prestarte sus trabajos materiales con las obras publicas que el municipio emprende para el mejoramiento de la comunidad principalmente desorientan a los padres de familia que sus hijos no los manden a la escuela oficial por tenerlos en la escuela bíblica que ellos profanan."

[247] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Pues teniendo el permiso oficialmente sería peor y para que este pueblo viva tranquilamente unificados como estábamos antes, suplico o conceder el permiso de que se trata."

[248] See Kurt Bowen, *Evangelism and Apostasy: The Evolution and Impact of Evangelicals in Modern Mexico* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1996); Carolina Rivera Farfán, *Diversidad religiosa y conflicto en Chiapas: Intereses, utopías y realidades* (México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2005); Arthur Bonner, *We Will Not be Stopped* (Universal Publishers, 1999) and http://www.iglesia7d.org.mx/conocenos/historia for historical background on the Seventh Day Adventists in Mexico.

[249] Letter to Oaxacan Attorney General from Antonio Serrano, Andrés Serrano, and Francisco Rodríguez, 31 March 1964, Filed in *Asuntos Religiosos* 4/143.1 (3) "63" 292, AGEPEO. Original Spanish: "Y como las personas a que nos referimos son completamente fanáticos, toman la religión como una arma poderosa invencible para estar peleando continuamente con nosotros de tal manera que no somos tomados en consideración para ningún problema del pueblo…"

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treated unjustly in the local primary school due to their religion.[250] Finally, he accused leaders of the Catholic group of burning up an Adventist member's hay supply, causing eight hundred pesos worth of damage.[251] Yet, when they went to file a complaint with the town municipal government, Mayor Hernández Jiménez refused to question the accused men. Serrano closed by asking for the Oaxacan Attorney General's office to intervene and protect Adventists' rights and possessions.

It took six months before the federal government responded to the Evangelicals' request for an investigation. On September 2, 1964, Julio Patiño ordered Governor Brena Torres to conduct an investigation of municipal authorities in Santa María Texcatitlán persecution of the Evangelicals, but the conflict continued. On March 15, 1965, mayor Hernández Jiménez complained to the Public Minister of Justice in Cuicatlán that despite the investigation ordered by the federal government, the Adventists still did not have Oaxacan state or local permission for the new church. Hernández Jiménez hinted that the Cuicatlán Public Minister of Justice could enforce local law: "Since these men do not have the respective permit from the Oaxacan State Government, order them to cease worshiping and spreading Evangelical sect propaganda inside our town..."[252] This turned out to be a catch-22 for the Adventists. Their application for an official church permit had been approved at the federal level but was delayed at the state level. If they continued

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[250] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Y hasta nuestros hijos que ocurren a la escuela oficial, son recibidos por los maestros poniendo infinidad de dificultades que debemos decir no vienen al caso."

[251] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Como a las doce de la noche Gregorio fue a despertar a Francisco Rodríguez manifestándole que estaba ardiendo el zacate de su campo que había sembrado en compañía de Andrés y Antonio Serrano…y al preguntarle Francisco a Simón que porque había quemado su zacate este no contestó para nada, siguiendo su camino con los demás rumbo para el pueblo."

[252] Feliciano Hernández Jiménez to Sub-Secretary of State Guillermo Martínez León, 11 March 1965, 4/143.1(3) "63"/239, AGEPEO. Original Spanish: "En representación de mi pueblo, suplico a Ud. C. Secretario General del despacho del Superior Gobierno, ordene a estos señores cesen en dichas reuniones porque no tienen el permiso respectivo, así también le ruego a usted no concederles tal permiso…"

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holding services at the church, they would be violating state and local law. If they held services in private homes, they were in violation of Article 24, which prohibited worship outside of church buildings except for occasional pre-approved events.

Texcatitlán mayor Hernández Jiménez tried to use the state office to contain the Adventists' actions. He warned that trouble would erupt if he did not receive help from state authorities in keeping peace between the Catholics and the Adventists. The federal and state officials' delay in backing the Adventists' persecution claims resulted in a legal stalemate in which all parties claimed the law was on their side. Hernández Jiménez won in the short term. The Federal government backed the Adventists' application to open their church, but, because the state government sat on the case so long, the Adventists' church building was in disuse throughout the waiting period. Without the backing of a powerful defense movement or connections in Mexico City, it was difficult for Adventists to receive their permit in a timely fashion.

Yolotepec, Yosondúa

Unlike, the case in Coyula, the use of the national press did not always bring success. Despite headlines in Mexico City dailies on violence in Yosondúa, Presbyterian Bartolo Hernández López did not receive permission to hold worship sessions in his home or in a neighborhood church he helped build. The Yolotepec case follows a similar argument used by local authorities as seen with the Adventists in Santa María Texcatitlán that converts used their new religions as an excuse not to participate in collective projects that benefitted the whole community. It also follows the same argument as in Cuicatlán that local customs are more important to community solidarity than individual rights to practice a new religion.

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Yolotepec is a *ranchería,* or small hamlet, located in the municipality of Yosondúa, in the district of Tlaxiaco in the Mixteca Alta. The first Protestant Mixtec families in Yosondúa converted to Presbyterianism after returning from seasonal labor on a coffee plantation in Nopaltepec, Veracruz in 1949.[253] During the *bracero* program between 1942 and 1964, only a small percentage of indigenous Oaxacans took agricultural jobs in the United States.[254] More frequently and beginning in the 1930s, they migrated to Veracruz to work on coffee or sugar plantations, to northern Oaxaca to do mining work, or to Mexico City for factory jobs.[255] Unlike Cuicatlán where the Mazatecans converted after prolonged missionary visits by Methodist and then Presbyterian missionaries, Yolotepec migrants brought the religion back with them after working in Veracruz.

The conflict began in May 1957 when Bartolo Hernández López filed a grievance with district, state, and federal authorities alleging that Catholics had burned down his home on December 14, 1956. Hernández López complained that municipal authorities

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[253] *El Universal,* August 16, 1958.

[254] On braceros, see Jonathan Fox, "Indigenous Mexican Migrants," in Mark Overmyer-Velázquez, editor, *Beyond La Frontera: The History of Mexico-U.S. Migration*, 163. See Lynn Stephen, *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 96-97 and 108-112 for her oral histories with ex-braceros in Teotitlán del Valle and San Agustín Atenango, Oaxaca. In Teotitlán del Valle, 25% of adult males did participate in the bracero program, higher than average for Oaxacan indigenous villages. Stephen also discusses internal Oaxacan and Mexican migration patterns for Zapotecs of the central valleys and Mixtecs of the Mixteca Alta. See also Carlos Durand Alcántara, *La lucha campesina en Oaxaca y Guerrero, 1978-1987* (Costa-Amic Editores, 1989), 152, for statistics on Mixtec internal and external migration in the 1970s and 1980s. Finally, see Alicia Barabas and Miguel Bartolomé, eds., *Dinámicas culturales: Religiones y migración en Oaxaca* (Oaxaca City: Centro INAH, 2010), 39-41, for background to Mixtec, Zapotec, and Triqui migration patterns. Barabas and Bartolomé demonstrate that Oaxacan migration to the United States did not take off in significant numbers until the 1970s.

[255] Fox, "Indigenous Mexican Migrants," 163. Bartolo Hernández, interview with author, Yolotepec de la Paz, Yosondúa, Oaxaca, April 15, 2009.

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refused to investigate the purported crime.[256] On July 7, 1957, Hernández López informed the governor of Oaxaca, Pérez Gasca, that the municipal authorities were repressing him and the other Presbyterians: "The Municipal Authorities, guided by five individuals, have dedicated themselves to harming us in the following ways: burning our homes, incarcerating us at times, they've told us to leave town, that we are a bad example, when in fact they are the ones who want to strip us of everything we have."[257] In response, the Catholic Yolotepec authorities also wrote a letter to President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines defending their actions against Hernández López and accusing the Presbyterians of fomenting violence in the community.

Presbyterians and Catholics in Yolotepec vehemently disagreed about the place of religion in social organization. Convert Bartolo Hernández López recalled that, in Yolotepec, local authorities constantly warned him that "everyone is Catholic here; these other religions don't exist."[258] For their part, municipal authorities stated in a 1958 letter to district judicial superiors that Hernández López "hides behind his religion" when he wanted to break local laws.[259]

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[256] Bartolo Hernández López, letter to Governor Pérez Gasca, 7 July 1957, AGEPEO 4/140 (24) '57'/1637.

[257] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Las Autoridades Municipales guiadas por cinco personas, se han dedicado a perjudicarnos en la siguiente forma: quemando nuestros hogares, encarcelándonos como hasta han llegado veces, que nos han venido decir que nos salgamos del pueblo, que somos un mal ejemplo, que ellos lo que piden es despojo."

[258] Hernández López, interview with author, Yolotepec de la Paz, Yosondúa, Oaxaca, April 15, 2009. Original Spanish: "Todo el mundo era católico; no hay de esas religiones aquí."

[259] Francisco Jiménez, Félix Hernández, and Tereso Hernández letter to Public Minister of Justice, Tlaxiaco, October 7, 1958, Municipal Archive of Santiago Yosondúa, Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca. Original Spanish: "Lo que no estamos dispuestos es tolerar que personas como el señor Bartolo Hernández López engañado vilmente, se escuda tras de una religión para sorprender a las Autoridades Superiores con sus falsedades y calumnias siempre el desorden se declare enemigo de su pueblo como lo hace él, insulte y se insubordino a las Autoridades y comete delitos sancionados por las Leyes."

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Aside from being a Presbyterian, Hernández López also shook up local norms by refusing to participate in tequio projects. Yolotepec mayor Francisco Jiménez Jiménez fined him for not participating in a road construction project. Hernández López took his complaint above Jiménez Jiménez to Yosondúa municipal president Tadeo García Gatica. Hernández López argued that it was not just his religious beliefs that made him question participating in collective labor projects that often went hand in hand with Catholic rituals but also the sentiment behind it. He stated: "By the grace of Christ we are not living in times of slavery but rather in an era in which we enjoy liberty of choice in many aspects of life, including our labor and our religion, as guaranteed in the Mexican Constitution."[260] For Hernández López, being compelled to participate in non-remunerated tequio projects constituted a violation of his Constitutional rights.

The case attracted national attention when Mexico City's *El Universal* newspaper featured a story about the conflict in Yolotepec on August 16, 1958.[261] The article mentioned that the Presbyterians' complaints to local and state authorities had reached the federal Ministry of the Interior office. The article included excerpts of Hernández López's letter to Governor Pérez Gasca describing the arson done to his home in December of 1956.[262] Hernández López said Catholic men, with the backing of local

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[260] Bartolo Hernández López to Tadeo García Gatica, September 10, 1958, Municipal Archive of Santiago Yosondúa, Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca. Original Spanish: "Por mi excelente señor no estamos en tiempo de la esclavitud para ser explotados de esa manera, sino estamos en la época de gozar toda clase de libertad, tanto en el trabajo como en nuestras religiones, como es garantizada establecida en la Constitución de la República en su artículo 5 que dice: 'Nadie podrá ser obligado a prestar trabajos personales sin la justa remuneración y sin su conocimiento.'"

[261] "Indígenas de Yolotepec se quejan hasta la presidente de la República," *El Universal,* August 16,1958.

[262] Bartolo Hernández López to President Ruiz Cortines, 7 July 1957, Municipal Archive of Santiago Yosondúa, Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca. Original Spanish: "Que el día trece del mismo mes de diciembre y por instrucciones de Alfonso y Roberto Hernández, Fortino y Bernardino Cruz, fueron encarcelados, sin motivo alguno, que el catorce del mismo mes como a las ocho de la noche, fueron a quemar la casa de

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authorities, burned down his house because he was holding Bible studies there with two other Presbyterian men in Yolotepec. Almost immediately following the news story, letters of concern from ordinary Protestant citizens and state and national government offices flooded the Yosondúan mayor's office. On August 18, 1958, Miguel García Cruz, Secretary General of the Mexican Social Security Institute, sent a letter to Yosondúa municipal president García Gatica warning him that conflicts in Yolotepec could easily escalate into "fatal conflicts" throughout the district.[263] The district minister of justice also sent a letter to García Gatica inquiring about the whereabouts of the Catholic men who Hernández López accused of burning his home. Mayor García Gatica wrote back that while he had attempted to cooperate with the Yolotepec authorities to apprehend the suspected men, the search was futile because the men's families reported they "had gone out to collect corn without specifying their location."[264] As this feeble attempt at an excuse suggests, authorities never charged the Catholic men.

The correspondence between town, district, and state officials continued until the end of 1958 when all the individuals involved were ordered to appear at Oaxaca City's state government office for a mediation session with representatives from the state Attorney General's office. The document trail fades out here, but, in 2010, Hernández

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Bartolo Hernández y Cirilo Ramírez, sin darse cuenta quienes fueron, que el 16 del mismo fueron otra vez encarcelados. Como los hechos anteriores constituyen los delitos de abuso de autoridad y daño en la propiedad ajena constado en asunto respecto a esta."

[263] Miguel García Cruz to Tadeo García Gatica, 18 August 1958, Municipal Archive of Santiago Yosondúa, Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca. Original Spanish: "Considero que cada quien tiene derecho a escoger su religión, siempre respetando a los demás y no provocando odios ni conflictos con este motivo, que fatalmente degeneran en disputas en Tlaxiaco."

[264] Francisco Jiménez, Yolotepec de la Paz, Yosondúa, letter to Yosondúa Municipal President, Tadeo García Gatica, July 27, 1958, Municipal Archive of Santiago Yosondúa, Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca. Original Spanish: "Me permito informarle que los individuos de referencia no fueron localizados porque según el decir de sus familiares, salieron en busca de maíz pero sin precisar lugar."

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López mentioned that instances of religious conflict still plagued his community.[265] He still did not have permission to run public services at the now decrepit church in Yolotepec. However, as discussed in the following chapter, his conflict paled in comparison to the one in 1977 between Yosondúa authorities and the SIL missionary team.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the intersection of constitutional law, local custom, national movements, and religious conflict. These cases demonstrate how the Ministry of the Interior's office attempted to enforce constitutional law by sending copies of the Mexican Constitution's Article 24 to village leaders and emphasizing the unlawful stance of the locals. These cases further reveal the strength of tradition vis-à-vis constitutional rights and the strong connection between charges of cultural imperialism and Protestantism. Despite the federal government's evident backing of religious freedom in Mexico, actual religious freedom was difficult to implement at the local level. While the Mexican federal and Oaxacan state government intervened in favor of nascent Protestant congregations, these entities also struggled with how to arbitrate individual vs. collective rights in indigenous communities. Protestants argued that they were the true supporters of the tenets of the Mexican Revolution in demanding federal enforcement of Article 24 of the 1917 Constitution. Opponents of Protestantism stated that collective rights were sacred to indigenous communities and religious ritual outweighed the preferences of minorities. The Mexican state feared bloodshed in the communities but ultimately had to defend individual rights guaranteed in the Constitution.

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[265] Bartolo Hernández López, interview with author, Yolotepec de la Paz, Yosondúa, Oaxaca, April 15, 2009.

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These examples support my assertion that conflicts between customary and constitutional law can be seen as attempts by locals to defend their community by strengthening local autonomy and using tradition as a justification against outside influences. In terms of the greater context of indigenous autonomy and rights to customary rule in Mexico, this chapter highlights these conflicts as nascent examples of the contested nature of indigenous peoples' integration into the modern nation-state.[266]

Most importantly, this chapter reveals an organized Evangelical Defense movement that successfully negotiated with national government offices when advising Protestant congregations in Oaxaca. Coupled with new technology that offered missionary radio programs and increased phone lines connecting rural areas of Oaxaca to the state and national capital, cases of religious conflict generated hundreds of responses directed toward local and federal political offices. Regarding the alleged case of religious intolerance in Coyula, hundreds of protest telegrams from different Mexican Protestant churches poured into the Oaxacan governor's office as well as the to the Ministry of the Interior in Mexico City. Yet not every Protestant group could take advantage of these networks. Groups like the Adventists in Santa María Texcatitlán found their ability to take advantage of the Constitution's religious freedom clauses difficult because they existed in isolation, without the national support networks that could put pressure on the federal and state government. Today, the media of choice to document and disseminate

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[266] See Les W. Field, "Global Indigenous Movements: Convergence and Differentiation in the Face of the Twenty-First-Century State," in Kathleen S. Fine-Dare ed., *Border Crossings: Transnational Americanist Anthropology* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 230-246, for a discussion of the theoretical construction of types of ethnic and political borders, as well as the global significance of indigenous peoples' struggle for sovereignty and representation vis-à- vis the modern nation-state.

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examples of religious persecution in Oaxaca to a national and international audience is the Internet, discussed further in this dissertation's fifth chapter.[267]

Clearly, conversion caused social disruption to indigenous communities in Oaxaca that had larger political implications. The tequio and the cargo system traditions were and are still contested between Catholics and Protestants today. In 1992, the Mexican government mitigated the anticlerical provisions of Article 24 in the Constitution by allowing religious organizations to be civil associations; their buildings were no longer property of the federal government. This change led to less bureaucratic red tape in opening new churches, but the conflicts remain volatile as converts in indigenous communities challenge social norms. Sociologist Kurt Bowen remarks in his 1996 study of the rise of Protestantism in Mexico, "Evangelical refusal to participate in tequio was an undeniable rebellion against a key element of traditional village life."[268] In the following chapter, I examine the role of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Oaxacan indigenous communities and its impact on indigenous tradition and identity.

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[267] For the growing literature on the role of social media in contemporary movements, see William Van De Donk, ed., *Cyberprotest: New Media, Citizens, and Social Movements* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Jennifer Earl and Katrina Kimport, *Digitally Enabled Social Change: Activism in the Internet* Age (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011); and, finally, David A. Snow ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007).

[268] Bowen, *Evangelism and Apostasy*, 188.

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Chapter Four: The Summer Institute of Linguistics in Oaxaca

> "Sooner or later, whether we like it or not, civilization is going to come to these tribes. Our concern is that it be *Christian* civilization."[269]
> —William Cameron Townsend, SIL Founder, 1958

> "If our ancestors were capable of creating magnificent civilizations and building Mitla and Monte Alban, indigenous peoples are clearly not inferior citizens. Nor should we permit the intrusion of the ways or idiosyncrasies of those serving North American imperialism."[270]
> —Raúl Tovar Hernández, Director of Casa de la Cultura de Oaxaca, 1979

Built in 450 AD, Mitla is Oaxaca's most striking Zapotec religious center. The site is a rare example of fifth century Zapotec mosaics fused with eleventh century Mixtec motifs. Today, only a few of the original monuments still stand. Spanish settlers destroyed most of the dwellings by building on top of the foundations or carting off the stones for construction projects. Sixteenth century Dominican friars built the Church of San Pablo on top of Mitla's sacred temple, symbolically demonstrating the Catholic conquest of paganism. Visitors to Mitla seldom venture outside of the tourist zone to notice another architecturally incongruous housing compound a few miles from the ruins.

Besides being Oaxaca's second most visited historic site, Mitla is also the headquarters of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) in Mexico. Prior to commencing evangelization programs in indigenous communities, SIL linguist-missionaries to this day spend weeks at the Mitla center sharpening their language skills and participating in pedagogical workshops. Beginning with SIL founder W. C.

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[269] Marianna Slocum and Sam Holmes eds., *Who Brought the Word* (Huntington Beach, CA: Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1963), 45.

[270] Ignacio Ramírez, "El ILV disgrega grupos, suprime tradiciones, provoca pleitos," *Proceso* October 8, 1979, 21. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. Original Spanish: "Si nuestros antepasados fueron capaces de crear civilizaciones grandiosas y levantar Mitla o Monte Alban, es falso que el indígena sea una persona de segunda clase, pero tampoco debe permitirse la intromisión en su idiosincrasia y forma de vida por parte de quienes tienen una mentalidad al servicio del imperialismo norteamericano."

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Townsend's 1935 recruitment pamphlet, "A Thousand Tribes without the Bible," the SIL set ambitious goals including a pledge to translate the New Testament into every unwritten language across the world, a task that would take about a decade per language to complete. [271] By 1969, the SIL was the largest Protestant missionary organization in the world with a sizable budget and contracts with host country governments in Mexico, Peru, Guatemala, Bolivia, Honduras, Surinam, Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, and Panama as well as several Asian and African nations.[272] In Mexico, the SIL had worked with fifty-six indigenous languages and 110 local dialects by 1979.[273]

Mexican federal entities such as the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (National Indigenist Institute, INI) initially worked closely with the SIL, but their ties increasingly shifted away from indigenous interests and towards multiculturalism in 1979 along with national political currents.[274] While many of the SIL's early programs initially complemented national integration goals, by the 1970s, the organization had failed to

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[271] Ethel E. Wallis and Mary A. Bennett, *Two Thousand Tongues to Go: The Adventures of the Wycliffe Bible Translators throughout the World Today* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966), 54-55. Eunice V. Pike, "William Cameron Townsend," in *Vigésimo-quinto Aniversario del Instituto Lingüístico de Verano,* eds. Benjamin F. Elson and Juan Comas (México, D.F.: La Tipográfica Indena Cuernavaca, 1961), 3-8. Israel Shenker, "Expert Linguist Spreads the Word with Missionary Zeal," *New York Times,* June 21, 1969, 29. See also http://wycliffe.org.uk//wycliffe/about/vision-2025.html for details on Wycliffe's most recent "Vision 2025," which calls for Bible translations in all remaining indigenous languages by that year.

[272] Laurie Hart, "Story of the Wycliffe Translators: Pacifying the Last Frontiers," *NACLA* 10 (December 1973): 16. Jesús Ángel Ochoa Zazueta, "El Instituto Lingüístico del Verano," *Cuadernos de Trabajo Estudios* (México City, Departamento de Etnología, 1975): 2. Colegio de Etnólogos y Antropólogos Sociales, *Dominación Ideológica y Ciencia Social: El ILV en México* (México D.F.: Nueva Cultura, 1979), 7-8.

[273] Salomón Nahmad Sittón to Fernando Solana, "Memorándum Confidencial," June 19,1979, Personal Archive of Salomón Nahmad Sittón, Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, Oaxaca City, hereafter (SNS).

[274] See Rebecca Overmyer-Velázquez, *Folkloric Poverty: Neoliberal Multiculturalism in Mexico* (College Station, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2010) for a critical take on PRI's political agenda in promoting multiculturalism.

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adapt to intellectual trends and indigenous rights movements that interpreted the SIL's continued presence in Mexico as a hegemonic incursion of "el american way of life."[275]

It is within this context of "participatory indigenism" that the SIL's presence in the Americas, particularly in Oaxaca, became emblematic of neo-colonialism with religious evangelization, relocation of indigenous peoples into central areas, and working hand-in-hand with high-ranking political officials on development projects that all seemed reminiscent of Spanish colonization in the sixteenth century. Eduardo Galeano's widely read 1971 book *Open Veins of Latin America* set the stage for a discussion on the legacy of the Conquest of the Americas. The Uruguayan journalist argued that, despite abundance in mineral resources, the majority of Latin Americans lived in abject poverty, mostly due to five centuries of European and U.S. imperialism.[276] Marxist-leaning intellectuals in Mexico who also drew connections between the role of U.S. government and exploitation of natural resources in Latin America shared Galeano's perspective. This wealth disparity was readily apparent in indigenous regions of Latin America. Within this context, Mexican anthropologists acknowledged the colonial vestiges inherent in their discipline, particularly the influence their research had on national state-building and development goals.

This chapter examines the SIL's history in Oaxaca from 1935 to the present by focusing on the impact of the SIL's presence in two regions of Oaxaca: the Mixteca and the Sierra Norte.[277] These regions were particularly targeted by the SIL due to a high

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[275] Colegio de Etnólogos y Antropólogos Sociales, *Dominación ideológica y ciencia social: El ILV en México* (México, D.F.: Nueva Cultura, 1979), 11.

[276] Eduardo Galeano, *Las venas abiertas de América Latina* (México: Siglo CCI Editores, 1971).

[277] Oaxaca is divided into eight geographic regions. The Mixteca region is enclosed by two mountain ranges in western Oaxaca, bordering with the Mexican states of Guerrero and Puebla. The

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poverty index and the largest population of monolingual Oaxacans. Because the SIL gave such prominence to Oaxaca, cases from that state are particularly informative to the organization's activities in Mexico; however, it is important to recognize that many of the SIL and the Mexican government decisions were national in scope and also applied to regions outside of Oaxaca. I first trace the SIL's early relationship to the Mexican government and then use Oaxaca as a lens to illustrate the various reactions, successes, and challenges that the SIL faced in Mexico. I then closely follow the SIL's impact on conceptualizations of indigenous identity through the mixed results of recent language revitalization movements.

The SIL

In 1917, twenty-one year-old William Cameron Townsend dropped out of Occidental College in Los Angeles to become a missionary. Raised on a perpetually insolvent farm in nearby Downey, California, Townsend aspired to become a Presbyterian minister after graduation.[278] However, after hearing China missionary John R. Mott speak at Occidental, Townsend joined the Student Volunteer Movement and devoured the memoirs of American missionaries abroad.[279] In September of what would

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Mixteca has seven districts: Juxtlahuaca, Silacayoapam, Huajuapan, Coixtlahuaca, Teposcolula, Tlaxiaco, and Nochixtlán. The Mixteca Alta and Baja are composed primarily of ethnically Mixtec peoples with minor populations of Triqui and Cuicatec peoples. La Sierra Norte is located in northeastern Oaxaca nestled between the Central Valleys and the Papaloapam region and sharing its eastern most border with the state of Veracruz. La Sierra Norte is divided into three districts: Ixtlán de Juárez, Mixes, and Villa Alta. Zapotecs primarily make up the districts of Ixtlán de Juárez and Villa Alta while there is a significant Chinantec population in Ixtlán de Juárez. The Mixes district is populated by ethnically Mixe people. See map in appendix for location of districts, languages spoken, and ethnic groups of the southwestern state of Oaxaca.

[278] William Lawrence Svelmoe, *A New Vision for Missions: William Cameron Townsend, the Wycliffe Bible Translators, and the Culture of Early Evangelical Faith Missions, 1896-1945* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008), 7-8.

[279] Hugh Steven, ed., *A Thousand Trails: Personal Journal of William Cameron Townsend, 1917-1919* (Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc., 1984), 20-21.

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have been his junior year, he signed a short-term contract to work as a salesman in Guatemala for the Bible House of Los Angeles. Townsend ended up staying fifteen years in an indigenous village outside of Antigua. While struggling to convert Cakchiquel Mayans in San Antonio under the auspices of the Central American Mission, a North American Protestant organization, Townsend concluded that before Mayans could be interested in reading the Gospel in Spanish, they first needed to be able to read it in their native tongue.[280]

In a November 1917 journal entry, he recorded a provocative conversation with a Cakchiquel Mayan who challenged him by asking, "Why, if your God is so smart, hasn't He learned our language?"[281] Cakchiquel was thus far an unwritten language. Despite lacking formal linguistics training, Townsend came up with a scientific formula for breaking down the structure of Cakchiquel by its own terms, not by trying to fit it into English grammar norms. He started the project by completing a Cakchiquel grammar reviewed by renowned linguist Edward Sapir in 1926.[282] In 1931, after over a decade of work, Townsend presented the Cakchiquel version to San Antonio residents as well as to Guatemala's President Jorge Ubico.[283]

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[280] Central American Mission (CAM) was founded in 1890 by Congregationalist minister C.I. Scofield. The minister was supported by American coffee investors in Costa Rica who wanted to convert their local workers to evangelical Christianity. See http://www.caminternational.org/index.cfm?go=page&pid=34 for background on CAM's initial work in Costa Rica.

[281] See Clarence W. Hall, "Two Thousand Tongues to Go," *Reader's Digest,* August, 1958, 197. See also Janet and Geoff Benge, *Cameron Townsend: Good News in Every Language* (Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 1998), 57.

[282] Benge, *Cameron Townsend*, 97.

[283] For a history of Protestantism in Guatemala, see Virginia Garrard-Burnett, *Protestantism in Guatemala: Living in the New Jerusalem* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998). For a background to W.C. Townsend's early missionary work in Guatemala, see Svelmoe, *A New Vision for Missions* and Benge, *Cameron Townsend.*

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That same year, Townsend met Moisés Sáenz, the undersecretary of Mexico's Department of Public Education (SEP), who was touring Guatemalan schools. A devout Presbyterian like Townsend, Sáenz was interested in exploring new pedagogical techniques to reach Mexico's non-Spanish speaking students. Sáenz observed Townsend's holistic language approach and invited him to try his methods with indigenous groups in Mexico.[284] With Sáenz's proposal in mind, Townsend organized the "Camp Wycliffe" linguistics workshop in Sulphur Springs, Arkansas.[285] Townsend began his 1934 summer session with two students training in phonetics, Bible translation, and basic cultural anthropology. With the help of his fellow missionary L.L. Legters, Townsend transformed "Camp Wycliffe" into the Summer Institute of Linguistics by August of 1935.[286] The Institute eventually attracted anthropology students studying Native American languages in North American universities. Consequently, by 1941 Institute participants could receive college credit from U.S. universities that attracted non-missionary secular students. These workshops quickly grew into a multi-campus institute that registered five hundred doctoral students enrolled in classes at the Universities of Oklahoma, Washington, and North Dakota by 1969.[287] Encouraged by Sáenz's interest, Townsend chose Mexico as the institute's first field work opportunity for his neophyte linguists. Later, he envisioned sending a legion of gifted evangelical Protestant linguists to translate the New Testament into indigenous languages across the globe.

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[284] Benge, *Cameron Townsend,* 108.

[285] Hugh Steven, ed., *Doorway to the World: The Mexico Years. The Memoirs of W. Cameron Townsend, 1934-1947* (Wheaton, Illinois: Harold Shaw Publishers), 7-8.

[286] Wallis and Bennett, *Two Thousand Tongues to Go,* 54.

[287] Shenker, "Expert Linguist Spreads the Word," 29.

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Townsend's proposal to teach indigenous peoples to read in both their native languages and Spanish answered President Lázaro Cárdenas del Río's challenge to "Mexicanize the Indian."[288] Driven by the tenets of *indigenismo*, post-revolutionary administrations celebrated Mexico's rich indigenous heritage through "the artistic renaissance, the popular legacy of the revolution, and the development of the social sciences."[289] *Indigenismo*, or the valorization of indigenous cultures, was advanced during Cárdenas's 1934-1940 administration through the establishment of the Departamento Autónomo de Asuntos Indígenas (DAAI) in 1936 and the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) in 1939.[290] At the same time, *indigenistas* "were not content simply to celebrate indigenous Mexicans; they also wanted to modernize, 'civilize,' and otherwise 'improve' them."[291] In 1936, Cárdenas called for

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[288] Stephen F. Lewis, "Mexico's National Indigenist Institute and the Negotiation of Applied Anthropology in Highland Chiapas, 1951-1954," *Ethnohistory* 55:4 (Fall 2008): 612. See also Lázaro Cárdenas, "Manifesto al Pueblo de Chiapas," February 25, 1934. President Lázaro Cárdenas's plan for Mexican Indians to assimilate reads in the original Spanish: "Incorporarlos definitivamente a nuestra civilización, borrando las características de parias que por desgracia todavía conservan…para darles los atributos que, conforme a nuestra época, les corresponden a todos los seres humanos y que les capaciten realmente para considerarlos factores de interés en la económica mexicana, con el propósito de convertirlos en hombres aptos para el cultivo intelectual y en fuerza económica activa para provecho de su raza."

[289] Lewis, "Mexico's National Indigenist Institute," 612.

[290] For background to the establishment of DAAI and INAH in Mexico, see Miguel Ángel Sámano Rentería "El Indigenismo institucionalizado en México (1936-2000): un análisis," in *La construcción del Estado nacional: democracia, justicia, paz y Estado de derecho,* ed. José Emilio Rolando Ordoñez Cifuentes (México, D.F.: Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, UNAM, 2004), 145-147. See also Robert Kemper, "From Nationalism to Internationalism: The Development of Mexican Anthropology," in *The Social Contexts of American Ethnology*, ed. June Helm (Washington D.C.: Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society, 1984), 139-156. For an argument on connections between indigenism and racism in Mexico, see Alan Knight, "Racism, Revolution, and Indigenismo," in *The Idea of Race in Latin America,* Richard Graham, ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 71-113. For a different take to Knight's on the paternalistic leanings of indigenismo, see Alexander S. Dawson, "From Models for the Nation to Model Citizens: Indigenismo and the 'Revindication' of the Mexican Indian, 1920-1940," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 30:2 (May, 1998): 279-308.

[291] Lewis, "Mexico's National Indigenist Institute," 612.

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"the fusion of all of the nation's ethnic groups."[292] Townsend was keenly aware of the niche his organization filled. "Knowing that Mexico is one of the countries where there is a great deal of enthusiasm for the cultural incorporation of the Indian," wrote Townsend in a 1935 letter to Cárdenas, "we want to form one of the first such societies here."[293] Sensitive to Mexico's strict anti-clerical constitution, Townsend emphasized the language goals of his organization.[294]

Beginning in the Cárdenas presidency, the SIL forged close relations with high-ranking Mexican officials working in indigenous languages and rural education. Upon arrival in Mexico in August 1935, the SIL introduced itself to prominent Mexican linguists and politicians at the Seventh Inter-American Scientific Conference in Mexico City.[295] In particular, Townsend developed a partnership with the Director of Rural Education, Rafael Ramírez.[296] Despite his initial discomfort with foreign missionaries living in indigenous communities, Ramírez concluded that the support the SIL would give to rural education outweighed the risk of proselytism.[297] Ramírez assigned Townsend the task of evaluating indigenous education programs in southern Mexico. Perpetually short of teachers in Oaxaca, Ramírez also paid two female SIL linguists'

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[292]Lázaro Cárdenas, General Population Law, as quoted in Mark Overmyer-Velázquez, ed. *Beyond la Frontera: The History of Mexico-U.S. Migration* (New York: Oxford University Press,2011), 274.

[293] Svelmoe, *A New Vision for Missions,* 241.

[294] See Steven, *Doorway to the World,* 41- 44 for background to Townsend's decision to give the SIL a secular name outside of the United States.

[295] Todd Hartch, *Missionaries of the State: The Summer Institute of Linguistics, State Formation, and Indigenous Mexico, 1935-1985* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 7. See also Steven, *Doorway,* 39- 41 for linguist Ken Pike's memory of the Seventh Inter-American Scientific Congress in Mexico City, 1935.

[296] Svelmoe, *A New Vision for Missions,* 247.

[297] Hartch, *Missionaries of the State,* 4-5. See also Steven, *Doorway,* 40.

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public school teacher salaries for their service in the Mazateca town of Huáutla de Jiménez, Oaxaca, beginning in 1936.[298]

Townsend's close relationship with Cárdenas had benefits for both parties. In 1936, Cárdenas recognized Townsend's Nahuatl field site in Tetelcingo, Morelos as a model modernization program. As a result, Tetelcingo received abundant seeds, fertilizer, and technical support for the crops that the Townsends introduced.[299] In hopes of gaining U.S. support for Cárdenas's controversial oil nationalization, the SIL organized a "Good Neighbor" picnic held along the U.S.-Mexican border in Tijuana in July 1939. President Cárdenas addressed a crowd of two-hundred well-heeled evangelical Protestants from southern California.[300] Knowing that Townsend was an acquaintance of U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Josephus Daniels and concerned about U.S.-Mexican relations following the October 1938 petroleum expropriation, Cárdenas asked Townsend to lobby for him among Protestant politicians and businessmen in the United States.[301] In his 1940 booklet "The Truth about Mexico's Oil," Townsend included a letter he had written to President Franklin Roosevelt proposing a "Good Neighbor" statue on the border between Mexico and the United States as a testament to the special relationship between the two nations.[302] The eighty-six page booklet was mailed to every single U.S. congressman.[303]

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[298] Svelmoe, *A New Vision for Missions,* 247. See also Steven, *Doorway,* 71-72 for an in-depth description of SIL linguists Eunice Pike and Florence Hansen's translation work in the Mazateca region of Oaxaca.

[299] Svelmoe, *New Vision,* 270-273. Steven, *Doorway to the World,* 52-53.

[300] Steven, *Doorway,* 120-121.

[301] David Stoll, "The Summer Institute of Linguistics and Indigenous Movements," *Latin American Perspectives* 9: 2(1982):90.

[302] William C. Townsend, *The Truth about Mexico's Oil: As Observed by W. Cameron Townsend.* (México, D.F.: Imp. Ocampo Hnos., 1940), 83-85.

[303] James and Marti Hefley, *Uncle Cam: The Story of William Cameron Townsend* (Huntington Beach, California: Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1984), 110.

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In his support of Cárdenas's move against Standard Oil, Townsend proved that he was committed to backing Mexican government initiatives.

Townsend's high ranking friendships paid off. By 1948, the SIL collaborated with the newly formed National Indigenist Institute (INI) on the "Indian Problem" by promoting literacy campaigns, economic development, and medical attention to indigenous communities. Influenced by the SIL's early success in learning indigenous languages and experience advising rural teachers, the SEP outsourced the production of bilingual primary textbooks to the SIL from 1951 to 1979.[304] In return for the SIL's educational collaboration with the Mexican government, the organization received office buildings in Mexico City, permission to lease a portion of the Lacandon rainforest in Yaxoquintelá in Chiapas as a "jungle training camp" for prospective missionaries, access to federal airstrips for SIL's Jungle Aviation and Radio Services (JAARS) planes, and leases to government property for regional centers in several states.[305]

In order to maintain such vital connections with federal entities in Mexico, the SIL downplayed the Protestant evangelization component of the organization. All SIL public relations literature emphasized the SIL's role as linguists, not missionaries, in Mexico. For example, the SIL's own letterhead sported a seal with the Aztec symbol for speech thus representing 'high Indian culture' and the SIL's role in incorporating "primitive peoples through their own languages."[306] This is not to say that the SIL deceived the Mexican government—Cárdenas, SEP, and INI officials knew quite well

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[304] See George M. Cowan, "Report of the Activities of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in México for the year 1951," *Sobertiro de Boletín Indigenista* 12:2 (1952), 5, for original contract.

[305] Colegio de Etnólogos y Antropólogos Sociales, *Dominación Ideológica y Ciencia Social: El ILV en México* (México D.F.: Nueva Cultura, 1979), 31.

[306] N. Pelham Wright, "Gift of Tongues," *Américas* 10 (April 1958): 18.

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that Townsend's ultimate goal was Bible translation— but rather it adeptly gave its missionary agenda a low public profile.[307] As journalist N. Pelham Wright described the SIL's religious agenda in 1958, "SIL workers are missionaries. But they represent no religious body, they hold no services, they distribute no tracts, they baptize no babies."[308] In instructional literature, Townsend reminded his missionaries: "Our purpose is to translate the Word as soon as possible..."[309] SIL presented its employees as detached from church-building. Townsend advised: "When several Indians have believed, it is well to meet with them regularly in their homes to study the Word. Call it a 'study,' not a 'service.' Singing and praying should be in the Indian language with Indians leading, though the missionary may have to do some unobtrusive steering from his seat in the audience."[310] Once indigenous converts wanted to establish churches, SIL personnel encouraged them but took a supporting, not leading, role; maintaining a church would get in the way of translating and jeopardize the organization's non-sectarian identity as well as attract unwanted attention from government officials trying to curb religious influences in Mexico.

The SIL rapidly extended its missionary fields to Central and South America: Peru in 1945, Ecuador and Guatemala in 1952, Bolivia in 1955, and Brazil in 1956. In 1958, *Reader's Digest* reporter Clarence Hall noted Townsend's knack for impressing

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[307] As anthropologist David Stoll said of the SIL's inherent contradictions with its 'non-sectarian' identity: "This will-o-the wisp is supposed to restrain zealous translators, distinguish SIL from other evangelical missions, and surmount the church-state objection to its contracts. Yet Wycliffe always has assured home supporters that it works with other evangelical missions and that translation produces new evangelical congregations." David Stoll, *Fishers of Men or Founders of Empire: The Wycliffe Bible Translators in Latin America* (Cambridge, Cultural Survival: 1982), 75.

[308] Wright, "Gift of Tongues," 19.

[309] W.C. Cameron, "Notes on Spiritual Work for WBT Field workers,1948" in *Mexican Branch Handbook* (Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1956) as quoted in Stoll, *Fishers of Men,* 75-76.

[310] Stoll, *Fishers of Men,* 76.

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Latin American governments: "He has not had to wrangle permission to enter; they invite him in—fast, with full government cooperation."[311] The SIL solicited funds from U.S. churches and private donors under the auspices of Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT) to maintain its operations in Latin America. By naming its U.S. counterpart after fourteenth century New Testament translator John Wycliffe, the SIL strategically marketed itself domestically as an evangelical organization serving disadvantaged populations. As a result, Wycliffe could "present the disguised Jesus to evangelicals in the U.S." while the SIL denied religious evangelization goals to Latin American governments.[312] Ironically, it was the SIL's obfuscated religious agenda that caused the organization's demise in Mexico and most of Latin America by the late 1970s.

The SIL and Indigenous Mexico

The focus on rapid economic modernization by mid-twentieth century Mexican governments meant that the SIL's work in indigenous communities went hand in hand with federal plans for a literate industrialized workforce.[313] While Cárdenas had attempted to develop the countryside through his bold distribution of *ejido* land, his successors, Manuel Ávila Camacho (1940-1946) and especially Miguel Alemán Valdés (1946-1952), focused intensely on development projects to prepare indigenous peoples for their entrance into urbanization and industrialization.[314] The SIL's service to the state

[311] Hall, "Two Thousand Tongues to Go," 215.

[312] Stoll, *Fishers of Men,* 79

[313] Anne Doremus, "Indigenism, Mestizaje, and National Identity in Mexico during the 1940s and the 1950s," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 17:2 (Summer 2001): 375-376.

[314] For Mexico's rapid economic initiatives in the 1940s and 1950s, see Daniel Newcomer, *Reconciling Modernity: Urban State Formation in the 1940s: León, Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004). See also Enrique Pérez López, et al., *Mexico's Recent Economic Growth: The Mexican View* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997).

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in literacy campaigns, irrigation projects, and vaccination crusades set the organization up for powerful alliances in the 1940s and 1950s.

In a 1948 speech, Director of Indian Affairs Héctor Sánchez outlined “the Indian Problem" for the emerging Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI). Sánchez lamented that indigenous peoples were “living in distant communities, practicing either primitive industries or agriculture, living in huts which cannot furnish adequate protection, exposed to disease and destructive social ills, coming indeed from the negative influences of civilization, isolated from the national civic currents, and with norms of extreme inferiority in some cases.”[315] Sánchez posited that indigenous peoples' marginalization was a national crisis that needed to be approached on several fronts.[316] Until then, Mexico as a whole could not progress since "as long as the conditions of backwardness exist among the Indians, it will not be possible to truly unite the Mexican nation."[317] Both the INI and SIL approached 'backwardness' in different ways but with the same goals in mind.

In the SIL’s 1953 report on its operations in Mexico Director John McIntosh discussed the organization’s role in helping modernize indigenous communities.[318] He mentioned that the SIL consistently supported INI “in their noble task of bringing the Indian population into the full enjoyment of Mexican national life.”[319] SIL were active

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[315] Héctor Sánchez, "A New Era in the Department of Indian Affairs," in *Boletín Indigenista* 3 (Mexico City, 1948): 47.

[316] Sánchez, "A New Era," 47.

[317] Ibid., 49.

[318] For an anthropological discussion of state attempts to promote Mexican nationalism in the Yucatán, see Ronald Loewe, *Maya or Mestizo? Nationalism, Modernity, and its Discontents* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

[319] John McIntosh, “Activities of the Summer Institute of Linguistics for the year 1953,” *Sobretiro de Boletín Indigenista,* 14:2, (1954): 5.

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members in their host communities. McIntosh stated that SIL employees “quickly find themselves to be a part of the native life” by contributing to projects such as irrigation or basic medical assistance. McIntosh gave as an example an SIL linguist who helped a Zapotec village build a school, describing it as a “privilege” for members to participate in such projects.[320] The Zapotecs had begun the project but did not have the architectural design skills to finish the roof. The jack-of-all-trades SIL linguist provided his expertise. In other words, the SIL supported educational and structural development in its host villages. The report suggests that if not for the SIL presence, the Zapotec community would have failed in their endeavor.

SIL publications frequently boasted the unassuming linguistic prowess of SIL linguists. An anecdote from Wright’s “Gift of Tongues” illustrates this relationship between linguist and community. In the Chinatec village of San Lucas Ojitlán, Oaxaca, Paul and Dorothy Smith published a Chinanteco-Spanish dictionary in 1955 that *mestizos* used to communicate with monolingual laborers.[321] Wright quoted one "leading Mestizo resident" in San Lucas Ojitlán who effusively praised Paul Smith's linguistic skills. “He’s fantastic. He speaks to our Indians as if he was one of them, and they love him. I was born here fifty years ago and I’ve never left the place, but I can’t understand a word they say. He’s not a priest. Who knows what he’s doing here, but he’s a fine fellow.”[322] This account by Wright, a British journalist and admirer of the SIL, reveals several insights into the organization’s position in the community. The SIL’s top-notch near-native language skills astounded locals in their proficiency. Wright also portrayed SIL

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[320] McIntosh, "Activities of the Summer Institute of Linguistics," 7.

[321] See W. Paul and Dorothy L. Smith, *One More Mountain to Climb* (Fairfax, Virginia: Xulon Press, 2002) for a personal account of the couple’s work in the Chinantec village of Ojitlan, Oaxaca.

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employees as so unassuming that an influential *mestizo* did not know they had come to convert the community to Protestantism. But regardless of such reports, religious evangelization most formatively shaped relationships between indigenous peoples and missionaries.

SIL literature stressed missionaries' responsibility in preparing indigenous populations for the onslaught of modern civilization. By spreading both literacy and the Gospel to indigenous peoples, SIL personnel hoped indigenous Protestants would enter mainstream mestizo life with 'Christian' values.[323] In an interview with *The New York Times* in 1969, SIL President Kenneth Pike described the organization's guiding principle: “If we can get the Bible to them in their own language, and get them to try to read it, and take it as a source of hope and courage, they may be able to survive the transition.”[324] Yet as Casa de la Cultura director Rául Tovar Hernández's quote in the beginning of this chapter asserts, Oaxacan indigenous peoples were the descendents of a highly sophisticated set of civilizations; Zapotecs, Mixtecs, Mijes, and the dozen other distinct indigenous Oaxacan societies already had their own advanced set of religious traditions that had thrived for centuries without the Bible. They did not need help surviving the transition to modernity. They wanted to deal with outsiders on their own terms and with respect toward the traditions and natural resources they possessed long

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[322] Wright, “Gift of Tongues,” 20.

[323] Benge, *Cameron Townsend*, 109. Slocum and Holmes, *Who Brought the Word, 45.*

[324] Shenker, "Expert Linguist,” 29.

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before the Conquest of Mexico. By the 1970s, integrationist indigenism transitioned into multicultural "participatory indigenism" designed *with,* not *for,* indigenous citizens.[325]

SIL and 1970s intellectual climate

From its inception, the social sciences in Mexico were tied into post-revolutionary nationalism. The founders of Mexican anthropology, Manuel Gamio, Alfonso Caso, and Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, promoted a Mexican national identity that the new revolutionary state endorsed and patronized.[326] In the 1930s and 1940s, that identity honed in on *mestizaje.*[327] Yet, by the 1970s, Mexican anthropologists started to detach themselves from national goals and policies vis-à-vis indigenous communities. Instead, a cohort of anthropologists influenced by the tumultuous 1968 student protests in Mexico criticized Mexico's indigenous policy. The challenges to the hegemonic PRI ruling party created an opening for reassessing intellectuals' roles in Mexico.[328] A new generation of anthropologists questioned official nationalism and saw indigenous identity as not exclusively Mexican but rather linked to the historic struggles of indigenous communities globally.[329]

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[325] Sámano Rentería, "El Indigenismo institucionalizado en México, 142. Lynn Stephen, *Zapata Lives! Histories and Cultural Politics in Southern Mexico* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002), 332.

[326] See Manuel Gamio, "Consideraciones sobre el problema indígena en América," *América Indígena* 2:2 (1942): 15-19 and "Dialogue on Indian Questions," *Boletín Indigenista* 14:4 (1954): 233–239. See also Alfonso Caso, "Definición del indio y lo indio," *América Indígena* 8:4 (1948): 239–247.

[327] See Anne Doremus, "Indigenism, Mestizaje, and National Identity in Mexico during the 1940s and the 1950s," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 17:2 (Summer 2001): 380-384 for a discussion of Caso and Gamio's creation of official *indigenismo*.

[328] President Luis Echeverría made an attempt to attract former student protesters and leftist intellectuals to serve in his PRI cabinet. See Elaine Carey, *Plaza of Sacrifices: Gender, Power and Terror in 1968 Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 154-157, for a discussion of the so-called democratic opening during the Echeverría administration (1970-1976).

[329] Arturo Warman, et al., *De eso que llaman antropología mexicana* (México, D.F.: Editorial Nuestro Tiempo, 1970), 57.

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By the 1970s, INI's policies of indigenous incorporation collided with anthropological ideologies that backed indigenous peoples in forging their own destinies within the nation-state. This transformation involved several key moments in Mexico. On January 20, 1971, Latin American social anthropologists gathered in Barbados to discuss their roles in the struggle for indigenous rights. Together they produced the Declaration of Barbados, which called for the liberation of indigenous peoples, the commitment of anthropologists to activist scholarship, and the immediate departure of foreign missionaries from indigenous communities.[330] The Declaration's authors were primarily a cohort of Mexican anthropologists including future INAH Director Guillermo Bonfil Batalla and future INI Director Salomón Nahmad Sittón.[331]

The Declaration demanded that social scientists and Latin American governments "contribute significantly to the process of Indian liberation."[332] The Declaration referred back to the European conquest of the Americas and the exploitation of native lands for mining.[333] Its architects argued that the official Latin American governments' "Indian policies" were a complete failure. "These policies are employed to manipulate and control Indian populations in order to consolidate the status of existing social groups and classes, and only diminish the possibility that Indian society may free itself from colonial

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[330] "The Declaration of Barbados," 1971, http://www.nativeweb.org/papers/statements/state/barbados1.php.

[331] See Stefano Varese "Memories of Solidarity: Anthropology and the Indigenous Movements in Latin America," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 21:3 (Fall 1997) for his personal account of the conference and its impact on indigenous rights movements.

[332] "The Declaration of Barbados," 1971, http://www.nativeweb.org/papers/statements/state/barbados1.php.

[333] See Miguel Bartolomé, *Procesos interculturales: Antropología del pluralismo cultural en América Latina* (México, D.F.: Siglo XXI Editores, 2006), 315-332 for background to the subsequent Declarations and Mexican Indigenous Congresses that he and other Mexican anthropologists participated in the 1970s.

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domination and settle its own future."[334] Furthermore, the Declaration pronounced religious missionaries, anthropologists, and business entrepreneurs as acting against indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination within a multi-cultural nation.

The Declaration was a bold challenge to social scientists to acknowledge their own ignominious contribution to neo-colonialism and pushed academics to position themselves within the interests of the groups they studied, not with, in Karl Marx's terms, the dominant oppressors.[335] In perhaps the most well known passage from the Declaration, the authors demanded that governments guarantee "to all the Indian populations, by virtue of their ethnic distinction, the right to be and to remain themselves, living according to their own customs and moral order, free to develop their own culture."[336] Here precisely is where the Mexican anthropologists parted from national indigenismo, which had called for indigenous peoples' integration into national life. This *Nueva Antropología* called for a radical rethinking regarding for whom and for what purposes the social sciences serve.[337]

As an outcome of the Barbados Declaration and Indigenous Congresses, Mexican anthropologists and activists pressured INI and SEP to stop relying on North American missionaries for bilingual education curriculum. This criticism of foreigners' primers for indigenous children is readily apparent in Nahmad Sittón's 1979 investigation of SEP and

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[334] "The Declaration of Barbados," 1971, http://www.nativeweb.org/papers/statements/state/barbados1.php.

[335] Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1988).

[336] "The Declaration of Barbados," 1971, http://www.nativeweb.org/papers/statements/state/barbados1.php.

[337] Margarita Nolasco, "Educación Indígena, una experiencia en Oaxaca," in *México Indígena: INI: 30 Años Después* (México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1978), 253. See also Salomón Nahmad Sittón, "Oaxaca y el CIESAS: Una experiencia hacia una nueva antropología," in *América Indígena* 50:2-3 (April-September, 1996): 11-32.

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in the writings of anthropologist Margarita Nolasco. SIL opponents such as Nahmad Sittón and Nolasco insisted that the SIL advocated "el american way of life" in indigenous communities in ways that bordered on ethnocide.[338] Sociologist Kurt Bowen notes that, with the growth of the social sciences in Mexico, it became "perhaps inevitable that resentment should grow towards a foreign agency defining itself as a defender of Indigenous culture."[339] In fact, this very premise, that indigenous cultures needed outsiders to protect them, led to challenges of the SIL's presence in Oaxaca.

The circumstances holding indigenous Mexico in poverty, as Director of Indigenous Affairs Héctor Sánchez spoke of at INI's inauguration, was now turned on its head. The "Indian Problem" that the SIL was so determined to solve in previous decades was now *their* problem. SIL's anecdotes about indigenous children pulling themselves up by their *huaraches* and becoming assimilated into national life no longer had an audience.[340] As anthropologists Søren Hvalkof and Peter Aaby stated in their 1981 condemnation of the SIL in *Is God an American?,* the SIL had overstayed their welcome in Latin America not because of its Bible translations but for its emphasis on American ideologies, capitalism, and national development projects in indigenous communities.[341] The following case study of a Mixtec community in the Mixteca Alta of Oaxaca

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[338] See Margarita Nolasco and Salomón Nahmad Sittón Mexican Senate Hearings' testimonies, May 1983, "Aclaraciones sobre lo expuesto ante la comisión de asuntos indígenas del Senado de la Republica referente al I.L.V.," transcribed in *Licitud Conforme a Derecho de las Demandas de las Comunidades Indígenas*, 1983, SNS, Oaxaca City, Oaxaca.

[339] Kurt Bowen, *Evangelism and Apostasy: The Evolution and Impact of Evangelicals in Modern Mexico* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 169.

[340] See Amalia Pallares, *Peasant Struggles to Indigenous Resistance: The Ecuadorian Andes in the late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 176-177 for a discussion of the links between pan-ethnic organizing in Ecuador and the expulsion of the SIL in 1981. Pallares also links anti-SIL rhetoric to Ecuadorian nationalism that was bulwarked by indigenous cultures, not assimilation.

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exemplifies a village's resistance to SIL's overarching ideological underpinnings and violation of indigenous rights to sovereignty.

Santiago Yosondúa, Tlaxiaco

The SIL carefully selected and groomed its missionaries. As Pike described in a 1969 *New York Times* article, "We recruit for motive and the first has to be religious motive."[342] After attending two mandatory Summer Institute of Linguistics training sessions at the Universities of Oklahoma, North Dakota or Washington starting in 1941, prospective missionaries had to complete a three-month "Wycliffe Jungle Camp" in Chiapas. The rational was that if the missionaries could endure the physical and emotional challenges of the Lacandon rain forest, they would be prepared for living abroad in villages with few basic services. In addition to learning survival skills, camp participants took classes on basic anthropological methodology, practiced linguistic techniques with Chiapan Tzeltal Indians, and engaged in long hours of independent Bible study.

Once in their assigned villages, SIL linguists analyzed the sounds and syntax of an unwritten language, assembled a dictionary, and, above all, translated the New Testament into a native language. Pike acknowledged how daunting this task was: "When we turn our people loose in the jungle on a language, they often get started all right and

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[341] Søren Hvalkof and Peter Aaby, "No Tobacco, No Hallelujah," in Hvalkof and Aaby eds., *Is God an American? An Anthropological Perspective on the Missionary Work of The Summer Institute of Linguistics* (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 1981), 185.

[342] Ibid.

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then run into problems."[343] Such problems could include ambiguity in translation exercises, cultural barriers, and suspicion regarding missionaries' agendas.

Bible translation could be particularly challenging with tonal languages in which one word might have several meanings depending on the pitch. One example of difficulty in tonal languages occurred in the Shapra language of Peru. A SIL linguist kept mixing up the tone for "sinner" and was saying God loves the "fat person" instead of God loves "the sinner," which confused tribe members who were learning about forgiveness.[344] Ambiguity in translation was also a major issue for missionaries in Oaxaca. Pike began translation work in the Mixteca region in 1936.[345] He explained that in the Mixtec language a sound such as *chaa* could mean "man," "come," or "smoke" depending on whether one used a low, medium, or high pitch.[346] Such variance in pitch could be problematic when translating Mathew, 19:14, which states, "Jesus said let the children come to me." If translated incorrectly, the Gospel passage could be confused with: "Jesus said let the children smoke with me."

The experiences of Edwin and Kathryn Farris provide insight into the challenges SIL missionaries faced. Both in their early thirties in 1969, the Californians brought their three children to the Mixtec community of Santiago Yosondúa in western Oaxaca. Located in the district of Tlaxiaco, Yosondúa is a southern municipality divided into eight smaller *ranchería* entities. The Farrises offered Bible study classes, published

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[343] Shenker, "Expert Linguist," 29.

[344] Hall, "Two Thousand Tongues to Go," 205.

[345] In 1936, Ken Pike became the first SIL missionary in a Mixtec community. His sister Eunice Pike and Florence Henderson started in the Mazateca region that same year and Walter Miller worked in the Mixe region from 1938 until his death in 1978.

[346] Shenker, "Expert Linguist," 29. See also Edwin Farris, *Nuevo Testamento: En Mixteco de Yosondúa y en Español* (Liga del Sembrador, A.C. y Liga Bíblica Mundial del Hogar, 1988).

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scholarly articles on Mixtec tones, and recorded local histories and legends. Writing in a 1989 Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) missionary outreach bulletin, Kathryn Farris explained their interest in deciphering an unwritten language in the Mixteca region: "We wanted to make a positive impact on that culture— to leave a permanent work. We also knew the Lord had called us to do Bible translation. That was the real key."[347]

Members of the community found the Farrises' presence quite suspicious.[348] Some community members wondered why they were interested in developing a written form of the Mixtec language in the first place.[349] Some mestizos suspected that the Farrises were collecting their language findings for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) as a code language for espionage.[350] Farris also noted that mestizos were surprised that she and her husband viewed Mixtec as a full-fledged language, not a minor dialect. One mestizo

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[347] Kathryn Farris, "When God Directs the Play," *Presbyterian Church in America CEP,* 1 July, 1989, http://www.pcacep.net/when-god-directs-the-play.html, (accessed 26 April 2012).

[348]Searle Hoogshagen, a SIL missionary in the Mixe region, described a similar suspicion in Catalan. The former missionary recalled: "During our first weeks in the village, it was obvious that the people—especially the women—were afraid of us. When I would walk up or down the street the women would hastily get their children into the house. We later learned that they had heard rumors that Protestants ate babies." Searle Hoogshagen, 100:1*Missionary Monthly,* January 1, 1996, 6.

[349] Farris, "Asking Others to Have Faith When We Didn't," *Presbyterian Church in America CEP,* 1 March, 1990, http://www.pcacep.net/asking-others-to-have-faith-when-we-didnt-have.html, (accessed 25 April 2012).

[350] Individuals suspicious of SIL motives in native language acquisition might have been referring to the use of Native American languages for message coding during World War II. The Navajo language was used in the Pacific Rim by the US marines; it was the one code that the Japanese could not break. The idea to use Navajo was suggested by Paul Johnston, the son of Protestant missionaries who grew up on a Navajo reservation. Fluent in Navajo, Johnston was a top advisor to the Marines and recruited Navajo men to serve in the program. In 1968, the State Department released declassified documents from World War II acknowledging the crucial service of Navajo code breakers. See Peter Iverson and Monty Roessel, *Diné: A History of the Navajos* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 183. See also Doris A. Paul, *The Navajo Code Talkers* (Pittsburgh: Dorrance Books, 2003), 7-10. Suspicion of Americans' motives for learning indigenous languages is not limited to US missionaries abroad. Title VI Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) language programs for US graduate students came under scrutiny following the September 11 attacks in 2001. One University of Michigan language professor discouraged her students from accepting FLAS funding for less commonly taught languages, fearing that the Defense Department would ask them to be informants. See Jodie Morse, "No Spooks, Please. We're Academics," *Time Magazine,* October 15, 2001.

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familiar with Mixtec labor migration to the United States bluntly asked them: "Aren't these people in the United States for you to mock? Why did you have to come here?"[351]

The Farrises had multiple goals in translating the Gospels into Mixtec. First, they wanted to spread literacy to the indigenous population. More importantly, the couple hoped to eradicate what they deemed vestiges of paganism: the syncretic fusion of saints with native deities and pre-Hispanic rituals, which they believed fueled expensive alcohol-driven fiestas.[352] Kathryn Farris described the wake of a Yosondúa infant as an example of what motivated her as a missionary.

> Candles and wild flowers stood guard around the lifeless body. A saint's picture, moved from its prominent place, rested on a shelf above the homemade altar. Beside the baby's head a transistor radio blared rock music...The men in the town band stood outside drinking, then entered one by one. Soon undisciplined music filled the room, inaugurating a festive wake. Excitement heightened and laugher soared. The bottle of firewater slipped from one to another.... At the funeral, powerful fireworks shatter above us and the church bells clanged. Sweet incense filled the air. The funeral dirge began. The drunken musicians reeled forward...[353]

Prayer candles, a home altar with images of saints, and alcohol are all examples of folk Catholicism that distressed Protestant missionaries. In Farris's description, she implies that the Mixtec-Catholic rituals surrounding death were irreverent. She insinuates that the child's wake was basically an excuse for men to socialize with loud music and *aguardiente*. For Farris, this example reaffirmed why she and her husband were translating the New Testament. She reflected: "Suddenly, in the midst of death it became more than a need. It emerged as an urgent mission that must dominate our lives and

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[351] Farris, "Asking Others to Have Faith," http://www.pcacep.net/asking-others-to-have-faith-when-we-didnt-have.html, (accessed April 25, 2012).

[353] Farris, "Do you Really Care, Lord?," *Presbyterian Journal,* September 7, 1977, 10-11.

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dictate our future."[354] This missionary team vehemently objected to traditional mourning rituals and planned to change such practices by dedicating themselves to bringing the Gospel to Yosondúans.

Aside from translating Scripture, the Farrises were concerned with preparing Mixtecs to enter modern society. Kathryn Farris discussed their goals in the community: "We had faith that God's Word would one day make a difference, but not for a long time. We also wanted to see them with improved farming techniques, a better understanding of hygiene, and the ability to read. The mainstream of Mexican life was impinging upon them and we wanted them equipped to adjust to the changes."[355] Apparently, farming methods, hygiene, and literacy were the keys to assimilation. Protestant missionaries like the Farrises sought to both introduce and protect Mixtecs from modern, mestizo cultural norms.

A significant outcome of the Farris legacy in Yosondúa was their influence on Protestant conversion. First, they led Bible study courses in their assistant Isidoro Santiago Ojeda's home. In addition, Ed Farris and Santiago Ojeda collaborated to translate the complete New Testament into Yosondúan Mixtec, a nineteen-year project.[356] Perhaps their most important contribution was the formation of a Presbyterian church, the New Bethel Church of Yosondúa. While Ed Farris did not officially build the church, he paved the way for Santiago Ojeda to attract a congregation and receive backing from established Oaxacan Presbyterian ministers. By 1988, the congregation numbered two

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[354] Farris, "Do you Really Care, Lord?,"11.

[355] Farris, "Asking Others to Have Faith," http://www.pcacep.net/asking-others-to-have-faith-when-we-didnt-have.html, (accessed April 25, 2012).

[356] Edwin R. Farris, *Nuevo Testamento en Mixteco de Yosondúa* (México, D.F.: Liga del Sembrador, 1988).

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hundred members. Ojeda's family still worships there today although Santiago Ojeda himself had a falling out with the congregation in the 1990s after he returned from working in Baja California newly remarried.[357]

Santiago Ojeda's family was one of the earliest families to convert to Protestantism. Reacting to the common complaint about the SIL's impact on indigenous communities, Santiago Ojeda vehemently argued that Protestantism did not compromise indigenous identity or tradition. He stated that Protestantism had the opposite effect; it revitalized respect for indigenous tradition. As an example, he cited the role his pastor played in building the New Bethel Church. Pastor Sergio Morales was from Coatlán, a Mixe-speaking community in the Northeastern highlands of Oaxaca. Morales converted as a teenager when he started visiting SIL missionaries Searle and Hilda Hoogshagen's home to listen to liturgical hymns in Mixe.[358] In the 1980s, Morales creatively formed a Presbyterian presbytery called "Mizami" since he served Presbyterian congregations in Mixe, Zapotec and Mixtec zones of Oaxaca. Santiago Ojeda stated that Morales was a perfect example of reaffirming the value of indigenous languages. In Morales's Mixe services, Santiago Ojeda noted that all members speak and sing in Mixe and socialize according to Mixe customs proving that indigenous Protestants do not lose their customs but reaffirm them. Santiago Ojeda stated:

> There are many beautiful customs in indigenous communities representing different cultures and different ideas regarding how people behave, how people eat, how they work, how they respect each other, and how they greet each other. Indigenous culture and customs are very beautiful, and because of this, we can't say that evangelicals are opposed to indigenous culture; it's actually the opposite. When I was here [in Yosondúa], we made lots of books in Mixtec, teaching

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[357] Isidoro Santiago Ojeda, interview with author, Yosondúa, Oaxaca, September, 2010.

[358] Searle Hoogshagen, "Mixe Evangelical Churches: Leadership Training," *Missionary Monthly* 101:3 (March, 1997):12.

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> people how to read and write in Mixtec. After every Sunday service, which lasted an hour and a half, I'd spend a half an hour teaching Mixtec. We'd have a chalk board and chalk there, and I would teach the parishioners how to read and write in Mixtec. I gave out the Mixtec language books to the hermanos. There are eleven lessons in the book for learning Mixtec, and that's how the hermanos at the church learned to read Mixtec, and that's why since then they've been able to read the New Testament more easily in their language. That's what I did when I was working with the church.[359]

For Isidoro Santiago Ojeda, indigenous identity was strengthened by conversion to Protestantism.

While not as prolific in scholarly publications as their renowned colleague and Mixtec expert Kenneth Pike, the Farrises published important studies on Mixtec tone and syntax.[360] Even today, their Mixtec dictionaries remain some of the most cited reference sources by researchers in the Mixteca.[361] Aside from the dictionaries and New Testament translation, Ed Farris dedicated substantial time to recording local history and legends. His most popular and widely distributed historical work was the bilingual Spanish-Mixtec "Cuando Cárdenas visitó nuestro pueblo," an account of the 1970 three-day visit

[359] Isidoro Santiago Ojeda, interview with author, Yosondúa, Oaxaca, September, 2010. Original Spanish: "Hay muchas costumbres muy bonitas de pueblo en pueblo de diferente culturas de diferentes ideas de cómo es la gente, la gente como come, como hace el trabajo, como se respetan entre ellos, como se saludan, es muy bonita la costumbre indígena y con eso no queremos decir que el evangelio este en contra de la cultura indígena sino todo lo contrario, y cuando estuve aquí no termine de decirle que hicimos una cartilla de cómo aprender a leer y a escribir mixteco cada que se terminaba el culto, el culto dura dos horas pero reduje media hora, una hora y media de culto y media hora para enseñar el mixteco y tenemos un pizarrón y un gis y yo le enseñaba a leer y a escribir el mixteco y yo les regale sus cartillas a los hermanos y de acuerdo a la lección hasta que terminamos son 11 lecciones terminamos de aprender en ese libro el mixteco y así fue como los hermanos termina de la iglesia aprendieron a leer el mixteco y entonces el nuevo testamento lo leían más fácil y así hice yo cuando estaba trabajando con la iglesia."

[360] See Edwin Farris, "A syntactic sketch of Yosondúa Mixtec" in *Studies in the Syntax of Mixtecan Languages,* Henry Bradley and Barbara E. Hollenbach, eds. (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics and the University of Texas at Arlington, 1992). See Kathryn Farris, *Diccionario básico del mixteco de Yosondúa, Oaxaca* (México, D.F., Instituto Lingüístico de Verano, 2002).

[361] See Kevin Terraciano, *The Mixtecs of Colonial Oaxaca: Ñudzahui History, Sixteenth Through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 416, fn3.

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by former President Lázaro Cárdenas to Yosondúa.[362] The collection chronicles a number of community members' reflections on Cárdenas's visit to inaugurate a new boarding school for Mixtec children from more isolated zones of the district.

Farris's account of Cárdenas's 1970 visit displayed for the community the importance of the Mixtec language by translating every interview into Mixtec. Yet, while the book showcased the SIL's linguistic prowess, it was careful to emphasize Yosondúan Juventino Martínez Cruz's authority over the publication. Farris was identified as the assistant, not the editor, following the SIL's *modus operandi* to emphasize its supporting, not central role, in indigenous communities. Just as SIL personnel were supposed to let indigenous converts establish Protestant churches, SIL encouraged its linguists to emphasize local contributions in language translation projects.

Cárdenas's visit was a moment of great pride for the community. SEP representative Alicia Leal stated that the legacy of the General's visit "left an inerasable footprint for all of the inhabitants of this town."[363] The publication on Cárdenas's visit was a local history but also an important affirmation of the SIL's legitimacy. It represented the organization's commitment to the scientific and cultural study of native languages, not a biblical tract but rather a community history of a famous president's visit.[364] General Cárdenas's decades' long support had been crucial in the SIL's continued acceptance by Mexico's government. Cárdenas continued working for the Mexican government on development projects such as the Balas River Dam in the Mixteca until

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[362] Juventino Martínez Cruz and Edwin Farris, eds., *Cuando Cárdenas Visitó Nuestro Pueblo,* (México, D.F.: Instituto Lingüístico de Verano, 1980).

[363] Alicia Leal, "La visita de Lázaro Cárdenas," *Cuando Cárdenas Visitó Nuestro Pueblo* (México, D.F.: Instituto Lingüístico del Verano 1980), 15.

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his death in October of 1970.[365] SIL missionary-linguists like Farris walked a fine line between religious evangelization and government approval. Having a publication on *tata Lázaro* upped his street credibility. Politicians also recognized the significance of Cárdenas's popularity in rural Mexico.

Throughout his 1970-1976 Presidency, Luis Echeverría channeled *cardenista populism.*[366] He supported *campesino* land invasions of ex-haciendas and, more importantly, encouraged the creation of the 1975 First National Congress of Indigenous Peoples, a large-scale replication of Cárdenas's regional congresses in the late 1930s.[367] The National Congress of Indigenous Peoples was an important step in creating a network of indigenous activists across Mexico.[368] The national congress brought indigenous agency to the forefront of populist Echeverría's rural programs. While the congress was certainly an appendage of the PRI party, it nonetheless served "as a catalyst" for indigenous organizing throughout the nation.[369] Echeverría's emphasis on "participatory indigenism" changed the trajectory of SEP, INI, and PRI interactions with

[364] See Verónica Vázquez Mantecón, "Lázaro Cárdenas en la memoria colectiva," *Política y cultura*, (México, 2009) for a discussion of collective memory surrounding Cárdenas's populist legacy.

[365] For background on the Balsas River project that brought the former President to the Mixteca in 1970, see W.C. Townsend's biography, *Lázaro Cárdenas: Mexican Democrat* (Waxhaw, North Carolina, 1979, 2nd edition) 393-397.

[366] See Amelia M. Kiddle and María L.O. Muñoz, eds., "Introduction: Men of the People: Lázaro Cárdenas, Luis Echeverría, and Revolutionary Populism," in *Populism in Twentieth Century Mexico: The Presidencies of Lázaro Cárdenas and Luis Echeverría,* eds. Kiddle and Muñoz (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010) for a discussion of *cardenista* populism.

[367] Alan Riding, "Mexico Trying to Lead Indians into World but Save Traditions," *New York Times,* December 26, 1975.

[368] Muñoz credits the emergence of effective indigenous mobilization to the Echeverría administration's "participatory indigenimso." See Muñoz, "Populism, Indigenismo, and Indigenous Mobilization," in *Populism in Twentieth Century Mexico*, 124-125.

[369] Muñoz, 132-133.

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indigenous communities.[370] By the late 1970s, many indigenous communities asserted their rights to autonomy and control over natural resources.[371] One recurring theme in national and local conversations was the presence of foreigners in indigenous communities. This issue is readily apparent in a conflict between the SIL and Yosondúan leadership.

In June of 1977, Yosondúan leaders called an *asamblea* with all male members of the community. The elders discussed a serious problem that they had with SIL missionaries' continued presence in Yosondúa. Municipal president Flaviano Nicolás López accused Ed Farris of exploring nearby archaeological zones without first seeking community elders' permission.[372] On June 27, 1977 the municipal leaders of Santiago Yosondúa met with a local Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) official, Dr. Juan Alcalá, and SEP's *promotor bilingüe* (bilingual advocate), Cándido Coheto Martínez. The municipal officials announced that they had met in an asemblea and had decided to tell Farris that he had thirty days to leave the town.[373] Among his supposed offenses, Farris had entered the Yucuñu zone, a sacred spot where Mixtec kings were allegedly buried. López insinuated that his community believed there were valuable artifacts possibly made of gold in the zone.[374] López said that Farris's actions particularly offended the community because he explored the areas with other North American

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[370] Lynn Stephen, *Zapata Lives! Histories and Cultural Politics in Southern Mexico* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002), 332.

[371] See Genaro Domínguez, "Las demandas de los indios," *INI 40 Años* (México D.F.: INI, 1988) 261-264.

[372] Flaviano Nicolás López, Sabino Sánchez Rosas, Ismael A. Osorio Rosas, Francisco Martínez Velasco, Juan Alcalá García, and Cándido V. Coheto Martínez, "Acta de los indios de Oaxaca," Yosondúa, 27 June, 1977, SNS.

[373] López, et al., "Acta de los indios de Oaxaca."

[374] Ibid.

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missionaries who were strangers to the community. López's municipal *regidor,* Ismael Osorio, suggested that since Farris's linguistic field work was done, he had no business being in the community.[375] Finally, the Yosondúa authorities complained that Farris built his house without the authorization from the town and cut down forest wood without the approval of the town. [376]

PRI official Alcalá backed López and Osorio by affirming that Farris had visited the archeological sites to collect *tepalcates,* or pottery shards, in the past.[377] He gave an example in 1973 when Farris tried to acquire a pottery piece that belonged to a town resident.[378] Authorities intervened and prevented Farris from obtaining the piece. While it is not clear from the documents whether Farris allegedly sold the pieces in the black market or was trying to discourage the pre-Hispanic worship practices that occurred at the site, it is clear that the municipal authorities wanted to expel him immediately. SEP bilingual advocate Martínez Coheto suggested that the town members give Farris more notice before expelling him. In response, the town government decided to give him until the last day of the year, December 31, 1977, to terminate his linguistic responsibilities and to leave the community. The petition also stipulated that in Farris's remaining time he would enjoy the support of the municipal authorities providing that he limit his work to linguistic research but he was strictly prohibited from entering the community's archeological zones.[379] Copies of the meeting's minutes were sent to the SIL national

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[375] Ibid.

[376] Ibid.

[377] Ibid.

[378] Ibid.

[379] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Que durante su tiempo sigue gozando del apoyo de las autoridades, con la condición de que se limite a su trabajo de investigación lingüística y que le queda estrictamente prohibida visitar las zonas arqueológicas para evitar saqueos."

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office in Mexico City, SEP's Office of Indigenous Education, and INI. Farris's case provides insight into how some communities were suspicious of missionary intentions in their country. Town authorities used the example of foreigners violating community norms and sacred space as a reason to expel local missionaries. Mexicans also suspected that North Americans with planes could be searching for valuable minerals, resources, or archeological sites.[380]

Local Protestants maintain that Farris's purportedly suspicious hikes around the archeological zone were just an excuse to expel SIL personnel and exemplify the new political stance that the Mexican government was taking vis-à-vis the SIL in Mexico. SIL language assistant Isidoro Santiago Ojeda described the archeological zone and the 1977 conflict:

> The *gringo* maybe was curious and, since there are beautiful places here and they [*gringos*] like to see beautiful and exotic sites in nature, probably what happened is that they went to see the site but didn't take anything. What happened is that the people in town who go and gossip to each other, their rumors make their way to town authorities who get mad and start talking and saying "we're going to take him out of here since he's investigating where there's riches, where there's treasures." So, in time, they threw out the *gringo.* This didn't just happen here but came from Mexico City, from the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE), I think. They rejected all of the *gringos* who had expired visas; they sent them back to their country.... He came back later, but in the time he could not be here to work, he invited me to go to the United States. He got me my passport and took me there for a time. That's how the *gringos* were rejected, and I believe this was at the national level as well; I don't think it was just here. But the gringo who was here didn't get involved with archeological matters because he was a missionary. He was a good person that taught the Word of God here. That's what he was

[380] A similar accusation occurred in La Laguna de Guadalupe, Chicahuaxtla where SIL missionaries Robert Langacre y Claudio Good worked on Mixtec New Testament translations. The missionaries left the community in 1981 and their church, according to anthropologist Carlos Durand Alcántara, "was turned into a middle school that benefitted 257 students, instead of a handful of Protestants." Durand Alcántara also accused SIL missionaries in general of stealing precious geological formations as well as being spies. Specifically in La Laguna de Guadalupe, Durand Alcántara hints that the SIL missionaries flaunted their material wealth by building a home with two floors, something unheard of in La Laguna prior to the missionaries' arrival. See Durand Alcántara, *La lucha campesina en Oaxaca y Guerrero, 1978-1987* (Costa-Amic Editores, 1989), 50-53, for his criticism of the SIL in the Mixteca.

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dedicated to; he wasn't involved in matters other than the word of God. That's what I can tell you about him.[381]

Santiago Ojeda's interview complicates the dominant intellectual narrative in the 1970s that the SIL missionary presence in Mexico was an example of neo-colonialism.

The Farris family lived in Mexico until early 1980 when they moved to a newly formed SIL center in Catalina, Arizona. Like many SIL personnel, they no longer qualified for long-term Mexican work visas. As Santiago Ojeda mentioned, the couple worked on translations in Catalina, sometimes with his assistance. While they never lived permanently in Yosondúa again after 1977, Ed and Kathryn Farris returned to Yosondúa several times in the 1980s to celebrate completed renovations of the Presbyterian Church and to distribute copies of Farris and Santiago Ojeda's translation of the New Testament into Mixtec. At the time of Farris's death in 1995 in Oaxaca City, he was an Associate President of SIL Mexico. His gravestone in Catalina, Arizona attests to his proudest accomplishment in life. It reads: "Edwin Riley Farris, Translator of the New Testament into Mixtec of Santiago Yosondúa, Oaxaca."[382] In Yosondúa, his wooden home, the construction of which initially led to tension in the tight-knit community, still stands.

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[381] Santiago Ojeda, interview with author, Yosondúa, Oaxaca, September, 2010. Original Spanish: "Pues el gringo por curiosidad ya ve que hay lugares muy bonitos, y a ellos les gusta ver cosas extrañas y bonitas de la naturaleza y tal vez ellos fueron a ver pero no saquearon nada, nada más es la gente del pueblo que va y comentan entre unos y otros, estos rumores llego a la autoridad y se empezaron a enojar y empezaron a hablar y lo vamos a sacar de aquí porque está investigando donde hay dinero donde hay tesoros a eso se fueron y entonces llegó el tiempo que corrieron al gringo y no solamente aquí porque desde México desde la secretaria de relaciones exteriores creo, rechazaron a todos los gringos que no estaban bien sus papeles los regresaron para su país… Y después regrese y en ese tiempo que no podía estar aquí entonces me invitó que yo fuera para Estados Unidos y me sacaron mi pasaporte y me llevaron ahí estuve una temporada. Así fue como rechazaron a los gringos y creo que así fue a nivel nacional no creo que nada mas fue aquí, pero el gringo que estaba aquí no se metió en cosas arqueológicas porque él era un misionero, era una persona buena que enseñaba la palabra de Dios a eso se dedicaba no se dedicaba a otra cosa eso es lo que le puedo decir."

[382] http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=pv&GRid=85039104&PIpi=55707542, (accessed April 4, 2012).

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The case against the Farrises was a typical example whereby local authorities, SEP, and INI supported the Mexican government's growing recognition of indigenous autonomy. The example in Yosondúa was a regional example of the national condemnation of the SIL by indigenous rights leaders and anthropologists. Yet, the criticism of the North American organization's work in Oaxaca was not across the board. Santiago Ojeda's statement suggests some indigenous people have positive memories of the organization's impact on their community.

San Baltazar Yatzachi, el Bajo

The Zapotec community of San Baltazar Yatzachi in the Villa Alta district of the Sierra Norte provides another example of SIL's positive impact. Yatzachi has a long history of cooperation with Protestant missionaries. Starting in 1920, Presbyterian Reverend Lawrence P. Van Slyke and his wife ran a hostel for destitute Zapotec boys working in the city out of their Oaxaca City home.[383] In 1923, the couple chose to work as full-time missionaries in Yatzachi, a three days' mule ride from the state capital. As mentioned in this dissertation's introduction, Van Slyke pleaded for funding and permission to enter the Sierra Norte by declaring to his Mission Board: "The Indian is worth the best we have."[384] The Van Slykes worked in Yatzachi for thirteen years before turning the community over to newly arrived SIL missionaries.

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[383] W. Reginald Wheeler, Dwight H. Day and James B. Rodgers, *Modern Missions in Mexico* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1925), 264.

[384] Lawrence P. Van Slyke, as quoted in Wheeler, et.al. *Modern Missions in Mexico*, 280-281. See also "Rev. L.P. Van Slyke Works for More than Two Years on Translation of British Scholar's Book into Spanish," in *The Nunda News,* April 28, 1960, for a report on Van Slyke's subsequent missionary activities and academic pursuits after serving as a missionary in Oaxaca from 1920-1936. In the article, Van Slyke mentions his goal of making Protestant scholarly and theological works available to Latin American Protestants.

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Yatzachi hosted three SIL missionaries: Californians Otis and Mary Leal and Oregonian Inez M. Butler. The Leals worked in Yatzachi from 1937 to 1987. In 1951, Otis Leal published "Problem in Zapotec Translation" in the *Bible Translator.*[385] Early into his translation work, he described feeling deathly ill 25 percent of the time he resided in Yatzachi. Of the causes for his frequent bouts with dysentery, Leal believed: "It has been our experience that the taking of God's Word to an area where it has never been available in a language which the people can understand will result in a Satanic attack…"[386] Despite the Leals' health issues, they managed to support local Protestants in establishing a Baptist church, "Cristo el Salvador," in June of 1973.[387] Following his wife's passing in 1989, Otis Leal remained in Los Angeles where he ministered to Zapotec migrants, many from Yatzachi, until his death in 2005 at age ninety-eight.[388]

Arriving to Yatzachi in 1952, Butler published nine SIL works on the Zapotec language and culture including her much cited analysis of Zapotec witchcraft fables.[389] Not just writing for a missionary audience, Butler also published her secular linguistics

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[385] Otis Leal, "Problems in Zapotec translation," *The Bible Translator* 2 (1951): 164-66. In 1954 he also published with his wife Mary, "Noun possession in Villa Alta Zapotec," in *International Journal of American Linguistics* 20 (1954): 215-216.

[386] Otis Leal, *Mary: A Tribute to God's Work in One of His Servants* (Garden Grove, CA: Otis Leal, 1997), 17.

[387]Archivo General del Poder Ejecutivo de Oaxaca, hereafter, AGPEO, Expediente: 2/22383, June 5, 1973.

[388] The Leals arrived to Yatzachi in 1937. For a personal account of their experience in Yatzachi, see Leal, *Mary: A Tribute to God's Work in One of His Servants.* See also "Otis Leal, Dear Senior Missionary," http://www.calvarylife.org/reach/vision2005.html, (accessed 4 April 2012).

[389] Many SIL missionaries investigated the customs behind witchcraft in the hope of eradicating the beliefs surrounding it. In 1963William Townsend reported with satisfaction: "Witchcraft, killings, superstition, ignorance, fear and sickness are giving way before the Light of the Word, literacy, medicine and contact with the best in the outside world." Townsend, "Tribes, Tongues and Translators," in Slocum and Holmes, eds., *Who Brought the Word,* 8; Inez M. Butler, "Un relato de la hechicería en los pueblos zapotecos de la sierra en el distrito de Villa Alta," *Tlalocan* 9, (1982): 249-255; Marjorie Davis, "Cuicatec Tales about Witchcraft," *Tlalocan* 4(1963): 197-203 and Eunice Pike, "Texts on Mazatec Food Witchcraft," *Tlalocan* 7 (1949):287-294.

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articles such as “Reflexive Constructions of Yatzachi Zapotec" in peer-reviewed journals, including the *International Journal of American Linguistics*. Her 1980 Zapotec-Spanish compilation remains the most comprehensive Zapotec dictionary in the Sierra Norte region.

Telésforo López Llaguno, Yatzachi's former mayor and the leader of the Pentecostal church in Yatzachi el bajo, was one of the first residents who converted to Protestantism after the arrival of SIL missionaries. He praised the Leals and Butler for beginning literacy programs, healthcare, and missionary work in his community. López Llaguno asserted that the missionaries not only translated the New Testament but also contributed to improving the community through outreach programs. The Leals and Butler often published for outside audiences but also directed their publications towards the local community. Pastor López Llaguno noted:

> Of course, the initial purpose [for the Leals and Butler to study Zapotec] was that one would read the Word of God in the Zapotec language, so that people could study the Bible and have some religious hymns in Zapotec. It's clear that those who don't speak Spanish appreciate the chance to be read to in Zapotec. [The missionaries] also made bilingual primers to teach literacy, and these primers did not just focus on the New Testament, they were also designed to help Zapotecs learn to read and write.[390]

For López Llaguno, the SIL missionaries helped strengthen Zapotec identity through their affirmation of Zapotec language.

Reminiscing about the positive contributions of missionaries like Butler and the Leals, López Llaguno noted that the missionaries built an airplane landing strip in the

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[390] Telésforo López Llaguno, interview with author, Yatzachi el Bajo, Oaxaca, May 2011. Original Spanish: "De hecho, siempre, la iniciación era que uno leyera la palabra de Dios en idioma Zapoteco, para que la gente entendiese y sobre todo también ellos, arreglaron algunos canticos en zapoteco y todo, eso claro cuando uno acude con alguna persona que no sabe español les gusta que uno le lea en Zapoteco y todo eso, de hecho ellos también habían hecho algunas cartillas para los analfabetas, si no únicamente se

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community. This landing strip benefitted not just the missionaries as they brought in visitors or supplies but also the larger community and region. For example, individuals suffering from life-threatening conditions such as poisonous snake bites were airlifted out to hospitals in Oaxaca City or Puebla.[391] López Llaguno also gave examples of the Leals and Butler transporting community residents to the SIL Oaxaca headquarters in Mitla for medical check-ups by SIL physicians. He stated:

> They were very friendly, and I can say that through [the missionaries] many lives were saved...Their services helped the community quite a bit... Their healthcare work benefited many who lived around the community; in fact, people would look for these linguists to obtain preventative medicine and treatments for adults and well as children. At the time there wasn't a way for us to get help; we were a remote town. There were no highways to the outside, and air service was the only way to get quickly out of the region. The missionaries put in a radio network that kept them in touch with the [JAARS] pilot and that's how so many people benefited from the services.[392]

Thus, unlike Flaviano López's suspicion over aerial activity in Yosondúa, Telésforo López Llaguno suggests that the JAARS service benefitted the whole community, not just SIL personnel or converts.

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enfocaron a la traducción del nuevo testamento, sino también apoyar algunas persona para que aprendieran a leer y escribir."

[391] For a background on SIL/WBT's Jungle Aviation and Radio Services (JAARS), which was created in 1948, see Marianna Slocum and Sam Holmes eds., "Airman's Halo," in *Who Brought the Word* (Huntington Beach, CA: Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1963), 38-41.

[392] Telésforo López Llaguno, interview with author, Yatzachi el Bajo, Oaxaca, May 2011. Original Spanish: "Si, si eran muy amables y yo puedo decir que a través de ellos muchas vidas fueron salvadas de diferentes enfermedades, estuvieron brindando primeros auxilios y medicinas, medicando a la gente, desparasitando a la gente. Inclusive en los años sesentas, no recuerdo bien las fechas, pero el pueblo participo para hace una pista de aterrizaje para avionetas, de hecho ese campo de aterrizaje sirvió muchísimo, no solo para nosotros sino para los pueblos circunvecinos, porque aquí subían a la gente que estaba ya casi para morir y ellos los recomendaban con un doctor muy bueno allá en Mitla, las alas del socorro, así se llamaban, porque ya no existen, aun con piquetes de las víboras venenosas." Telésforo López Llaguno, interview with author, Yatzachi el Bajo, Oaxaca, May 2011. "Esto ayudo mucho a que se acercaran a la comunidad, de hecho la gente buscaba mucho a los lingüistas, con la finalidad de que les previeran de medicamentos y curaciones, tanto niños como adultos. Porque no había manera de como, no teníamos carreteras, éramos un pueblo muy marginado y únicamente la avioneta cuando era de gravedad. Ellos mismo pusieron un radio, donde radiaban al piloto y llegaba para levantar y si muchas personas fueron beneficiadas."

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López Llaguno also noted that Butler spent more time in Yatzachi than in the United States. He was particularly impressed to learn after her death that she was a well-respected college professor in Oregon since she had always been humble about her background.[393] López Llaguno further recalled how Butler supported women in opening small businesses such as bakeries.[394] The fact that some residents of his community traveled to SIL headquarters in Catalina, Arizona for her 2000 funeral also suggests the connection community members felt with the North American missionary as well as demonstrates transnational connections between the community and the SIL Arizona office near the US-Mexican border. Most importantly, López Llaguno asserted that Butler truly identified with the Zapotecs and privileged their culture over American culture.[395]

Telésforo López Llaguno provides key insight into the conflict between Protestant beliefs and traditional *costumbres* of the town. As discussed in Chapter Three, indigenous Catholics argued that Protestantism was incompatible with ancient customs and rituals. These practices included financial cooperation for the annual patron saint fiesta, regular participation in voluntary *tequio* (collective work) projects, and fulfillment of a *cargo* (public service) position. Protestants, in turn, argued that many of the community rituals

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[393] López Llaguno, interview with author, Yatzachi el Bajo, Oaxaca, May 2011. Original Spanish:"Creo inclusive que Inés Butler estuvo más tiempo aquí que en su propio país, ella era de Oregón y era psicóloga, dio clases en las universidades, en Oregón y no sé donde más y no sé qué sintió el llamado de venir por acá y se vino dejando su tierra y aquí estuvo identificándose con los zapotecos. Yo la admiro, en verdad muchísimo porque cuando murió ella, escribieron este, ella murió en Arizona, algunos paisanos que son de aquí fueron allá a la velada creo a Arizona y repartieron su historia, autobiografía y ahí era donde decía que fue psicóloga, hasta entonces supe yo que fue psicóloga."

[394] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Ella incluso hizo un diccionario de Zapoteco de Yatzachi el bajo e inclusive enseño a algunas señora a preparar pastelillos, galletas."

[395] Ibid. Original Spanish:"Creo inclusive que Inés Butler estuvo más tiempo aquí que en su propio país, ella era de Oregón y era psicóloga, dio clases en las universidades, en Oregón y no sé donde más y no

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involved alcohol, dancing, and that the collective labor projects served the Catholic churches where they no longer worshiped. This type of conflict in Yatzachi provides an example of adapting traditional obligations with religious values.

López Llaguno insists that he was able to complete his *cargo* assignments as municipal president and director of the elementary school board without any incidents; he marched in patriotic parades with the Mexican flag and he led his community in the *Grito de Dolores* on Independence Day. “So, that is why people here never complain about us [Protestants] because we always fulfilled our obligation.”[396] He claims that he was able to negotiate religious differences quite easily. He said some in the community were nervous about doing the feast day with him as president because he would not participate in the traditional dance that opens the festival. When asked how he adapted his religious beliefs with community customs, he said he never had any major difficulties balancing the two.

> I was municipal President in 2001, and there were various weddings that year. The custom is that the municipal president has to start the dance. The people here admired me and many of them congratulated me on what a good job I did. Of course, thank God, my father provided me with a good education, and I know well the culture of the town. One elderly lady asked me if I was going to dance. I told her, "Of course, *Tia!* But I'm going to do it with my five senses and not with the bottle in my hand and that won't take anything away from it.” Here I was [at the fiesta] and most of them thought I was going to leave or not even come in the first place. One person asked me if I was going to skip the fiesta. I asked him why would I skip it? It turns out there were rumors about whether I would or wouldn't go on that day or if I even knew how to dance. I do dance the *son* music that plays here, and I showed them. Everyone had their mouths wide open, since I danced well, and I was not drunk. I danced because it was the custom of the town and it made the people happy that I honored it because my mother told me many years

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sé qué sintió el llamado de venir por acá y se vino dejando su tierra y aquí estuvo identificándose con los zapotecos."

[396] Telésforo López Llaguno, interview with author, Yatzachi el Bajo, Oaxaca, May 2011. Original Spanish: "Y pues la gente ahora sí que nunca nos apunta con el dedo, porque creo que hicimos un buen trabajo."

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ago that if the *presidente* didn't dance, there wouldn't be a party because everyone would leave. No, I tell you, I didn't skip this custom.[397]

Pastor López Llaguno's interview emphasizes his full participation in the fiesta without drinking. He danced while sober; with his *cinco sentidos* (full senses), not intoxicated and, therefore, took part in the dance more seriously than the typical festival revelers. He describes his Catholic town members feigning surprise that he knew how to dance. The above examples demonstrate that, although he was a Protestant, López Llaguno was able to maintain meaningful roles in the community. The fact that over ten percent of municipal presidents in Oaxaca today are Protestants suggests that Protestants are finding ways to negotiate custom with religious beliefs as they increasingly take on political roles of importance in their communities.[398]

In the above Yatzachi example, SIL missionaries played a key role in publishing Zapotec reading material and providing access to health care, which complicates the common assertion that the SIL divided indigenous communities. López Llaguno was able to negotiate his Protestant beliefs with tradition. As López Llaguno's interview attests, the SIL is positively remembered in Yatzachi to this day. To defend itself from criticism that

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[397] Ibid. Original Spanish:"Yo fui presidente municipal en año 2001 y hubieron varias bodas y la costumbre es de que el presidente municipal tiene que iniciar el baile y mucha gente se quedó admirada y muchas personas inclusive pasaron felicitarme y decirme que bien hiciste, claro gracias a Dios que mi padre me dio escuela y conozco la cultura del pueblo, claro me decía una viejita, me dice y vas a bailar?, ¡Claro Tía! lo voy hacer en mis cinco sentidos no con la botella en la mano y no se me quita nada o no se me quito nada (Risas) y aquí estoy y de hecho pensaban que a lo mejor iba yo no iba ir, una persona me dijo es cierto que te vas ausentar en la boda de tal persona y le dije porque me voy ausentar ¿qué hecho,? no, es que hay rumores de que tú te vas a ir ese día, te vas ausentar ese día, porque tú no sabes bailar y quien ha dicho tal cosa, yo si bailo al son que me toquen y lo demostré. Y la gente se quedo boquiabierta [risas], si porque a mí no lo hice ebrio ni nada, pero como digo en mis cinco sentidos, sobre todo se cuales son las costumbres de la comunidad, para que la gente esté contenta y todo no? Porque de hecho mi madre me decía hace muchos años cuando el presidente no quería bailar ya no había fandango, ya no había fiesta dice porque la gente se retiraba, no le digo, no se me quita nada

[398] See Frank J. Lipp *The Mixe of Oaxaca: Religion, Ritual, and Healing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), 52, for a discussion of the adaptations and reduced emphasis on Mixe rituals due to

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it was an imperialistic organization, the SIL often invited well-known Mexican intellectuals, activists, or indigenous peoples to speak on their behalf.

SIL Responds

Shortly after CEAS's condemnation of the organization, the president of SIL Mexico, John Alsop, sent the national news journal *Proceso* three letters from indigenous men in San Juan Atepec and Ixtlán de Juárez, Oaxaca defending the presence of the SIL. Simón Pérez and Amós Hernández claimed that the SIL missionaries taught them to defend their rights and to live a better quality of life. Pérez and Hernández compared the positive contributions the SIL made to Atepec to improvements Benito Juárez brought in modernizing Mexico in the mid-nineteenth century. Mario Villalobos Villalobos wrote that from the time that he was nine years old he had had a close relationship with the SIL missionaries in Atepec. He described how they taught him to read in Zapotec. He closed his letter by stating that those who criticize the SIL missionaries in Oaxaca did not really know them.[399] Responding to criticism of SIL work in Oaxaca, Mexican ethnographer Iñigo Laviada cited SIL missionary Walter Miller's forty years of labor in Mixe communities. Laviada complained in December 1978 that clueless Mexico City journalists engaged in old tropes linking US missionaries like Miller to espionage despite never having set foot in an indigenous village. Laviada, who conducted his research in the Mixes region and knew Miller personally, wrote this in response to a November 1978 article in Mexico City's *Excélsior* that insinuated SIL missionaries gave out free lunches

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Protestant conversion. See also *Los Mixtecos de la Sierra* (México: Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1982) for a brief discussion of the fading *cargo* system in Protestant Mixtec communities.

[399] "Tres indígenas defienden al ILV," *Proceso,* October 1, 1979, 6.

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to Oaxacan school children because they want "to fatten the children up and convert them into fuel for airplanes."[400]

SIL missionary Joan Olsen (pseudonym) offers a similar defense of the SIL's impact on indigenous communities. Olsen and her husband Wayne (pseudonym) were SIL linguists in the Juxtlahuaca Triqui zone of Oaxaca from 1960 to1980. The Olsens returned to Oaxaca again in 1996 to work in the Mixtec community of Magdalena Peñasco, Tlaxiaco. Olsen mentioned false accusations that SIL employees heard during their tenure in Oaxaca.

> Accusations that get recycled are that we are stealing their language and making big money selling it in the US, that we are testing drugs for US pharmaceutical companies, that we are sterilizing Indian women to keep the population down, that we are kidnapping people and turning their bodies into rocket fuel, and that we work for the CIA. All this seems to be connected with the envy and gossip that are such big parts of Oaxacan culture. In fact, when my husband and I got to Tlaxiaco [in 1996], the rumor was that we were spies for sub-comandante Marcos. I think my aptitude for "spy" on a scale of zero to ten would be something like minus two.[401]

Olsen also defended the SIL against the common accusation that it tried to destroy local customs. According to Olsen, such changes had little to do with the SIL. Olsen stated:

> The introduction of schools has also had considerable influence, but I think roads have done more, partly by letting the outside world in, but mainly by letting the indigenous people leave for periods of time and see other customs and places. Another huge factor in the past decade or two is media, first the radio, then TV and satellite TV, and now the Internet. There is virtually nothing in the media to promote indigenous languages or culture, and the influences are in general far from healthy.[402]

Olsen touches on several key criticisms of the SIL in Latin America. Her observations about other factors besides Protestantism changing indigenous customs are important.

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[400] Iñigo Laviada, *Excélsior*, December 7, 1978.

[401] Joan Olsen, e-mail message to author, July 25, 2009. Given the sensitivity of the SIL's presence in Oaxaca, I am using a pseudonym for these linguists.

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There certainly were divisions and significant changes in Oaxacan communities prior to the arrival of SIL missionaries: to argue otherwise discounts indigenous agency. But at the same time, while Protestantism in itself might not have caused the extensive changes detractors claimed, the SIL did have powerful and long-lasting connections within and outside of Mexico. Additionally, while the SIL denied its links to U.S. politics, W.C. Townsend met regularly with U.S. presidents and senators.[403] While there is little documented evidence to link SIL Mexico to any ties with the CIA, it is not difficult to understand why Mexican politicians, activists, or local leaders associated the SIL with the U.S. government's covert actions in Guatemala, Chile, and Bolivia to usurp socialist regimes. The SIL prided itself on its good rapport with Latin American government officials, many of whom in the late 1970s were right-wing military dictators.[404]

INI/SEP Response

As a result of the mounting questionable exposés of the SIL's purported CIA connections and the lobbying of Mexico City anthropologists, INI officials acted quickly in 1979.[405] SEP Director Fernando Solana Morales appointed Salomón Nahmad Sittón, Director of the Department of Indigenous Affairs, to evaluate the benefits or risks of

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[402] Ibid.

[403] Benge, 9-11, 213-214.

[404] Jonathan Benthall, "The Summer Institute of Linguistics," *Royal Anthropological Institute News* 53 (December, 1982): 3.

[405] In a widely-cited 1973 *NACLA* article, anthropologist Laurie Hart argued that the SIL 'pacified' indigenous communities with the Gospel so that multinational companies could exploit valuable uranium, petroleum and lithium deposits. Laurie Hart, "Story of the Wycliffe Translators: Pacifying the Last Frontiers," *NACLA,* 10 (December 1973):15-31. See Hartch, *Missionaries of the State,* 147-149, for a discussion of the impact of Hart's article on anthropologists globally. See John Alsop, "No despreciamos al indígena," in *Proceso*, October 1, 1979 for a refutation of the CIA/SIL connections. For SIL instructions to missionaries on how to handle false accusations of espionage, see Don Johnson, “Some Common Allegations and Fine Answers,” in *Best of Both Worlds: A Handbook in International Relations* (Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1988), 58-59.

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SEP's continued partnership with the SIL. In his June 19, 1979 memorandum to Solana, Nahmad Sittón advised the immediate cancellation of the SEP-SIL bilingual education agreement.[406] Nahmad Sittón warned that pending journalistic revelations of the SIL's ties to the CIA and petroleum companies would be comparable to Watergate.[407] If SEP continued to work with the SIL, SEP would face fierce criticism in the national and international arena. Nahmad Sittón asserted that any SIL linguistic work underway in indigenous communities could immediately be transferred to SEP's Department of Indigenous Affairs. It should, he argued, be Mexican bilingual promoters, not North Americans, designing public education curricula for indigenous children.[408]

Along with his recommendation that SEP sever its ties with the North American organization, Nahmad Sittón assured his superiors that he had contacted the Cárdenas family to inform them that SEP and INI no longer desired the collaboration with the SIL. This matter was delicate because, at the time, Amalia Cárdenas, General Cárdenas's widow, was the honorary president of the SIL in Mexico. She and her son, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, future Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) presidential candidate, had appeared at several SIL events. For example, in June 1977, the Cárdenas family traveled to Waxhaw, North Carolina to inaugurate the SIL's "Cárdenas-México" museum, which one Mexico City journalist described as "a symbol of goodwill and friendship between

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[406] Salomón Nahmad Sittón, "Memorándum Confidencial," to Fernando Solana Morales, 19 June 1979, SNS, Oaxaca City, Oaxaca. While Nahmad Sittón headed the investigation, he was assisted by General Director of INAH Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, SEP Cultural Director Dr. Rodolfo Stavenhagen and INI Director Ignacio Ovalle Fernández.

[407] Nahmad Sittón was referring to Charlotte Dennett's research for *Thy Will be Done: The Conquest of the Amazon: Nelson Rockefeller and Evangelism in the Age of Oil* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995) which claimed Nelson Rockefeller's business ties to the SIL and the CIA.

[408] See Les W. Field, "Global Indigenous Movements: Convergence and Differentiation in the Face of the Twenty-First-Century State," in *Border Crossings: Transnational Americanist Anthropology,*

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two neighboring countries."[409] Despite such a close relationship, Nahmad Sittón reported that the Cárdenas family understood the political firestorm surrounding the SIL and would sever their ties with the organization.

Losing the Cárdenas family's backing was a crucial blow to the SIL's legitimacy in Mexico. The organization prided itself on its relationship with the Cárdenas family stretching back to 1935 and saw Lázaro Cárdenas as a close friend. In fact, the most popular display at the "México-Cárdenas" museum is the 1938 blue Chevrolet automobile that *Don Lázaro* donated to Townsend for his fieldwork excursions.[410] Townsend's support of Cárdenas's decision to nationalize Mexican oil in 1938 put him at odds with Protestant donors in the U.S. who branded Cárdenas a socialist. After his presidency, Townsend remained close friends with Cárdenas. For example, Lázaro and Amalia Cárdenas served as Best Man and Matron of Honor in Townsend's second marriage to Elaine Mielke in 1946; the ceremony took place in the Cárdenas home along Lake Pátzcuaro, Michoacán.[411] Furthermore, in 1952, Townsend wrote a *New York Times* reviewed hagiographic biography of Cárdenas, including an opportune second edition published in 1979 just as the SIL was wearing out its welcome in Mexico. Townsend's collaboration with the Mexican government beginning in 1935 earned him the *Aguila*

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ed. Kathleen S. Fine-Dare (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 230-236, for a discussion of the debate over recognition of Native languages at the official and local level.

[409] Pedro Gringoire, *Excélsior*, Mexico City, June 21,1977. *It is worth noting that "Pedro Gringoire" was the pseudonym for Methodist writer Gonzalo Baez-Cámargo. Under that name he worked for fifty years as a reporter for *Excélsior*, often writing favorable articles for the SIL. See Carlos Mondragón, *Like Leaven in the Dough: Protestant Social Thought in Latin America, 1920-1950* (Madison, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 2010), 152 fn3.

[410] "North Carolina, Exploring Cultural Heritage Online," http://www.inst.ncecho.org/PhotoDetail.aspx?siteno=00519&photono=007, accessed May 10, 2012.

[411] Janet and Geoff Benge, *Cameron Townsend: Good News in Every Language* (Seattle, YWAM Publishing, 1998), 185.

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(Eagle) award in 1978, the highest honor a foreigner can receive from the Mexican government. This close relationship with the government changed in one quick year due to the efforts of Mexican academics.

The Mexico City-based National College of Ethnologists and Social Anthropologists (CEAS) academics used the framework of internal colonialism to describe SIL's influence on indigenous communities in Latin America. CEAS's involvement began in 1975 when anthropologist Jesús Ángel Ochoa Zazueta labeled the SIL a "pseudo-scientific imperialist organization" in his eighty-five-page condemnation.[412] Signed by thirty prominent Mexican anthropologists, it concluded with a demand that all government entities, individual researchers, and activists working on cultural projects in indigenous communities denounce the SIL and its activities and support its immediate suspension.[413] In early September of 1979, the CEAS led an organized opposition movement against the SIL. Finally, on September 21 based on Nahmad Sittón's recommendations and the CEAS protests and press campaigns, SEP formally severed the bilingual education contract with the SIL that dated back to 1951.

A special edition of *Proceso* October 1979 on the SIL followed CEAS's denunciation of the SEP-SIL contract in September of that year. The lead articles argued that the SIL undermined indigenous traditions in Oaxaca and fostered violent confrontations between evangelical Protestants and Catholics.[414] The *Proceso* issue contained several interviews with community leaders and indigenous educators

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[412] Jesús Ángel Ochoa Zazueta, "El Instituto Lingüístico del Verano," *Cuadernos de Trabajo Estudios* 11 (México D.F.: Departamento de Etnología, 1975): 2.

[413] Ibid., 81.

[414] Ignacio Ramírez, "Oaxaca: El ILV disgrega grupos, suprime tradiciones, provoca pleitos," *Proceso* Nacional October 8, 1979 21-22.

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throughout Oaxaca. Opponents to the SIL focused on its negative impact on indigenous culture through its insistence on *individualism,* not *collectivism*. Eliseo Pérez García, legal representative for Indigenous Affairs in the Sierra Juárez, Oaxaca, complained that the SIL destroyed converts' participation in *tequio*. He wrote, "In response to this, the gringos, state that there is not an Article in the Mexican Constitution that obliges Mexicans to contribute to tequio. They [the gringos] say tequio goes against God and that we should respect private property. Many of us are opposed to them but the truth is that these Mexicans side with the Bible [over tequio]."[415] Pérez García's assertion speaks to the overarching argument against Protestantism in indigenous communities that it prioritizes individualism over collectivism.

Nationalism and anti-imperialism also played an important role in the rapid demise of the SIL. Mexicans who converted to Protestantism and befriended missionaries were called "malinchistas," or "sell outs," a reference to conquistador Hernán Cortés's indigenous translator and mistress, La Malinche. For example, Santiago Salazar, coordinator of the Spanish Language Pilot Plan in the Mixteca, complained that in San Juan Mixtecpec there was an American known as "Uncle Tom" who became involved in all town activities. However, he concluded: "The indigenous people also are to blame for letting foreigners or white people impact the community. Unfortunately, 'el malinchismo' still causes us much damage."[416] Again, converting to Protestantism undermined not just indigenous cultures but also Mexican nationalism.

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[415] Ramírez, "Oaxaca: El ILV disgrega grupos," *Proceso Nacional*, 21.

[416] Ibid., 22. Original Spanish: "Pero también indígena tiene la culpa por dejarse impactar porque son güero o extranjeros. Desgraciadamente el malinchismo aun nos hace mucho daño."

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Other Oaxacan opponents to the SIL focused on the SIL's monopoly of bilingual education. Cándido Coheto Martínez, now State Coordinator of Indigenous Education, looked back at the conflict in Santiago Yosondúa to explain why SEP teachers, not missionaries, should be in charge of bilingual education.

> It is false that bilingual education advocates are not qualified to develop the linguistics field. Our promoters have prepared bilingual primers of very high quality, but we need support to develop this branch without undermining indigenous cultures. While the SIL is given translation contracts for bilingual textbooks, our [INI/SEP] work is not recognized and we are abandoned [by government entities].[417]

Flor Vásquez, regional advocate for Zapotec communities of the Central Valleys, agreed with Coheto Martínez. "Despite the many shortcomings, our work has greater significance than that developed by members of SIL, because they don't know us [indigenous Oaxacans] intimately. We talk to our people in our native language and, at the same time, teach them Spanish. But not as the missionaries that try to make us forget our language in search of a divine peace and other non-existent paradises."[418] Vásquez's statement makes it clear that native indigenous language speakers —not North American missionaries— should be in control of empowering Mexico's indigenous people through culturally sensitive programs, not Bible study. INI and SEP agreed.

Nahmad Sittón and other prominent Mexican anthropologists such as Margarita Nolasco, Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, and Rodolfo Stavenhagen argued that the SIL's school

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[417] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Es falso que nosotros no estemos capacitados para desarrollar la ciencia lingüística. Nuestros promotores han elaborado cartillas bilingües a la altura de las mejores, pero necesitamos apoyo para desarrollar esta rama sin demerito de las culturas indígenas. Solo que mientras a los miembros del ILV se les dieron o dan toda clase de facilidades, a nosotros nos tienen prácticamente abandonado."

[418] Ibid. Original Spanish: "A pesar de las múltiples carencias, nuestra labor tiene mayor significado que la desarrollada por los miembros del ILV, porque ellos no nos conocen a fondo. Nosotros les hablamos a nuestra gente en lengua nativa y a la vez le ensenamos el castellano. Pero no como los

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primers taught indigenous children to be submissive and to favor North American values.[419] For example, primers designed for Chinantec-speaking children in northern Oaxaca near the Veracruz border teach Chinantec children to be respectful of authority and mind their social status; in "Juan Tonto," "Foolish Juan" always did the opposite of "Juan Listo" or "Intelligent Juan." In another primer, "El Carbonero Vengador," "the Avenging Coalman" caught customers stealing from him. Both primers conveyed messages that the indigenous person was child-like and that one had to respect the rights of private property and businesses or else pay the consequences.[420]

In such primers, indigenous people were always depicted as laborers and mestizos were their honest but firm employers who required them to dress appropriately in western clothing and follow all directions. Indigenous protagonists who had not adapted new ways were depicted as always carrying a bottle of aguardiente and dressed in tattered *manta* fabric clothing with palm hats. The examples above were published in 1978 and suggest that the SIL (and SEP) still had not made the transition from 1950s era primers, such as the Mixtec "Jica ri escuela" (I go to school) in which the young boy greets his *mestizo* teacher with his eyes cast down and learns the basics about sickness prevention and hygiene. In the late 1970s indigenous rights climate, INI officials wanted to transition to a bilingual education program that affirmed indigenous cultures, autonomy, and self-determination. The embarrassment for the Mexican government, according to Nahmad

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misioneros que hasta nos hacen olvidar nuestro lenguaje en busca de una paz divina y otros paraísos no existentes."

[419] Margarita Nolasco, "Aclaraciones sobre lo expuesto ante la comisión de Asuntos Indígenas del Senado de la República referente al ILV," May, 1983, 1, SNS.

[420] "El Carbonero Vengador," Chinantec, (ILV, 1978). "Juan Tonto: Cuentos folklóricos, " Chinantec, Tepetotutla, (ILV, 1979).

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Sittón, was that such aforementioned SIL primers were stamped with INI and SEP seals of approval.[421]

Another critique Mexican anthropologists had of the SIL's educational manuals in Oaxaca was that the cooking recipes directed at indigenous women were not possible with the basic stoves available in rural Oaxaca nor were they culturally sensitive to local diets. For example, the suggestion of pancakes for breakfast and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for lunch was not a staple menu for Oaxacan family cuisine and often called for ingredients that were unavailable, unaffordable, or unappetizing to rural communities.[422] To reverse what he called cultural ethnocide, Nahmad Sittón pushed for INI to train and send its own workers to do outreach to indigenous communities, not North Americans.[423] By 1980 INI had 85 Centros de Coordinación Indígenas (Indigenous Coordinating Centers, CCI) in Mexico, a substantial increase from the beginnings in 1951 when there were just two Centros de Coordinación in the whole country, 11 centers in 1970, and 64 centers in 1975.[424] In Oaxaca, there were 20 centers in 1980, an increase from just three in 1954. In 1980, INI began to devote a greater share of its budget to recruitment and training of native (bilingual education advocates.[425] As INI programming grew, the SIL scaled down its own but did not ever fully withdraw from Mexico.

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[421] Nahmad Sittón, "Aclaraciones sobre lo expuesto ante la comisión de Asuntos Indígenas del Senado de la República referente al ILV," May, 1983, 3, SNS.

[422] For example, see Lucía López de Policarpo, Angélica Salvador Policarpo, Inéz M. Butler, eds., *Goncho pastel: vamos a hacer pasteles; recetas para hornear pasteles y galletas* (México, Instituto Lingüístico del Verano, 1972).

[423] Benthall, "The Summer Institute of Linguistics," 3.

[424] Riding, "Mexico Trying to Lead Indians into World but Save Traditions," *New York Times,* December 26, 1975.

[425] Rámon Hernández López, *La Educación para los Pueblos Indígenas de México* (México, D.F.: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2000).

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SIL in Oaxaca, post-1979

SIL's exodus from Mexico was a prolonged and contested process. Many linguists were still in the midst of field work and asked for additional time. Despite being in Mexico for forty-three years, the SIL still had barely completed one half of its proposed translations, a goal that would have rendered their stay indefinite.[426] In 1979, the SIL had 372 missionary-linguists in the country; 92 linguists were stationed in Oaxaca.[427] About half of the total SIL employees already had legal residency in Mexico, making the non-renewal of work visas difficult to enforce. In addition, Townsend used his remaining connections with respected Mexican politicians and intellectuals to appeal SEP's decision and stall the organization's departure.[428] As an immediate measure to satisfy the CEAS accusations of secret training in clandestine zones of southern Mexico, the SIL closed its "Jungle Camp" in the Lacandon rainforest of Chiapas.[429] Still, the most visible post-1979 denunciations against the SIL took place in Oaxaca.

With its sixteen distinct indigenous groupings, Oaxaca was an important target for SIL Bible translation and remained the principal center of linguistics operations in Mexico.[430] At the national level, just three percent of Mexicans were monolingual in an indigenous language, mostly residing in southern Mexico. According to the 1975 census,

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[426] Guillermo Correa e Ignacio Ramírez, "Los indígenas exigen respeto a su cultura," *Proceso,* October 15, 1979.

[427] In 1979 there were 91 missionary-linguists in Oaxaca. Colegio de Etnólogos y Antropólogos Sociales, *Dominación Ideológica y Ciencia Social: El ILV en México* (México D.F.: Nueva Cultura, 1979), 33.

[428] Todd Hartch notes the SIL's temporary success in appealing to President José López Portillo directly in 1982. After all, López Portillo had approved Townsend's 1978 *Águila* award presented by the Mexican embassy to acknowledge his forty-two years of service in Mexico. Hartch describes the resiliency of the SIL; despite all the condemnations, they managed to keep running in Mexico. Hartch, *Missionaries of the State,* 152-153,162.

[429] Earl Adams, "The End of an Era: Closing up Jungle Camp," April 11, 1980, as cited in Hartch, *Missionaries of the State,* 157, 214, fn69.

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over eleven percent of Oaxaca's 2.5 million residents spoke an indigenous language only. In Oaxaca between 1936 and 1979, SIL linguist-missionaries had worked in thirty communities studying variants of the Cuicateco, Chinanteco, Chontal, Huave, Mazateco, Mixe, Mixtec, Triqui, and Zapotec languages. Yet, the SIL still aspired to work on New Testament translations for sixty-two more Oaxacan dialects.[431] This ambitious proposal led to more conflicts in the 1980s.

In October of 1979, a month after the September 21 SEP-SIL severance of contract, the SIL Oaxacan headquarters at Mitla continued operating normally. Mitla directors John Lind and Alan Jamieson continued linguistics workshops as scheduled. *Proceso* journalist Ignacio Ramírez described SIL's Mitla "base" as an ostentatious example of Yankee imperialism. Ramírez noted the American style housing units, replete with fences to separate each individual lawn; California, Virginia, North Carolina, Arizona, and Texas license plates; and the exclusive playground with shiny slides and monkey bars for linguists' children. As one Mitla resident complained in 1979, "The gringos own practically the whole hill up there."[432]

Beginning in 1983, Oaxacan indigenous rights networks and parent-teacher associations launched a series of public complaints against the SIL's continued presence in Oaxaca. On March 23, 1983, *Novedades* reported that Oaxacan indigenous activists encouraged President Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado to issue an edict demanding the SIL's

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[430] Colegio de Etnólogos y Antropólogos Sociales, *El ILV en México,* 33.

[431] Ignacio Ramírez, "El ILV anuncia en Oaxaca que seguirá su labor," *Proceso,* October 15, 1979, 28.

[432] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Al decir de un habitante de la región, 'los gringos son dueños de casi todo el cerro.'"

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departure.[433] Despite Fernando Solana Morales's elimination of the SIL-SEP contract on 21 September 1979, SIL linguists continued their work throughout the 570 municipalities of Oaxaca.[434] De la Madrid made a much anticipated presidential visit to Oaxaca to share his commitment to indigenous communities as well as respect for cultural preservation. His visit was planned to coincide with President Benito Juárez's national holiday of March 21. He outlined his administration's vision for social and economic programs in indigenous zones of Mexico, comparing the resilient strength of Oaxacans to its most famous native son. In honor of Juárez's legacy, he pledged 493 million pesos to Governor Pedro Vásquez Colmenares for development programs in indigenous zones.[435] That sum, combined with Vásquez Colmenares' proposal to invest 563 million pesos in creating public highways in rural zones, was the largest investment for development outside of the state capital or tourist zones along the coast.

Newly inaugurated in December of 1982, de la Madrid set forth his agenda for indigenous Mexico during that spring Oaxaca visit: "Mexico's indigenous policy should not be a policy for indigenous people but rather with indigenous people. We want to hear proposals from indigenous people and have them actively participate in relevant programs. We want indigenous Oaxacans to be the authors, not the objects of state and federal programs."[436] De la Madrid's vision represented a striking overhaul from the

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[433] Oaxaca City's *Noticias* offered wide coverage of De la Madrid's visit, particularly his stance on the SIL. "MMH Testimonio el Clamor Que Exige la Expulsión del ILV," *Noticias,* March 22, 1983. "Clamor Indígena en contra del ILV," *Noticias,* March 23, 1983

[434] Roberto Santiago and Marcos León, "El ILV, Instrumento de Penetración y Espionaje de los Estados Unidos: Proporcione la División Política de los 570 municipios," *Noticias,* February 22, 1982.

[435] Miguel Ángel Ramírez, "Respeto y preservación de su identidad cultural," *El Día: Vocero del Pueblo Mexicano,* March 23, 1983. "Fuerte Inversión para las Zonas Indígenas," *El Nacional,* March 23, 1983.

[436] Ibid. Original Spanish: "La política indígena de México no solo debe ser una política para los indígenas, sino con los indígenas. De ellos queremos escuchar planteamientos: de ellos queremos obtener

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original architects of Mexican indigenism who saw themselves as benevolent fathers of indigenous peoples who would transition into *mestizos.* Part of this commitment to indigenous Mexico meant the ouster of the SIL. On the campaign trail, in his *consultas populares* (public meetings), de la Madrid bluntly stated that the only thing the SIL had accomplished in indigenous villages was to "impose the truth of the white man."[437]

In a visit to the Mixteca Baja town of Laguna de Guadalupe in Juxtlahuaca, de la Madrid ordered remaining SIL missionaries to leave Oaxaca. The *Asociación Nacional de Padres de Familia* (National Parents Association) praised de la Madrid's enforcement of the SIL's departure from Oaxaca.[438] Association President José Ortiz Arana stated that, "religious sects, especially the North American SIL, have as an objective to divide our indigenous communities and eliminate their customs and beliefs."[439] De la Madrid agreed. In his speech to Laguna de Guadalupe residents he warned: "We are Mexicans because of our indigenous roots, and if we allow the loss of these indigenous cultures, we will be denying all Mexicans their heritage."[440]

A popular political cartoon published in Oaxaca City's *Noticias* the day after De la Madrid's visit perhaps best sums up the SIL *persona non grata* status in Oaxaca

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su participación activa en los programas relativos: queremos que los indígenas de Oaxaca sean autores y no objetos de los programas de Gobierno Federal y del Gobierno del Estado."

[437] Elena Gallegos, "Desde el Poder se Prohijó al Lingüístico," *El Sol de México,* March 23, 1983. Original Spanish: "imponer la verdad del hombre blanco." See also Cecilia Zanetta, *The Influence of the World Bank on National Housing and Urban Policies: The Case of Mexico and Argentina during the 1990s* (Ashgate, 2004) ,108-110 for a description of Madrid's campaign strategies.

[438] Lauro López López, "Apoyo a la medida de expulsar de manera definitiva al ILV," *El Día: Vocero del Pueblo Mexicano*, March 23,1983.

[439] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Las sectas religiosas, de origen norteamericano y a las que pertenece el Instituto Lingüístico de Verano tienen como propósito desculturizar a nuestras comunidades indígenas y desarraigarlas de sus costumbres y creencias."

[440] Miguel Ángel Ramírez, "Respeto y preservación de su identidad cultural," *El Día: Vocero del Pueblo Mexicano,* March 23,1983. Original Spanish: "Si los mexicanos somos tales por nuestras raíces

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(figure 1). The cartoon depicts an indigenous person in tattered clothing, representing the state of Oaxaca, who is having his or her feet washed. The dirty water or perhaps mud coming off of the filthy feet represents the expected departure of the SIL from Oaxaca. The cartoon by Ortiz Ramírez is titled "Lavatorio" or "Washroom." Here the artist might simply mean bathroom or he might be making a larger criticism of the SIL's penchant for recruiting native language speakers to help them in their language laboratories as they translate the New Testament. Thus, the scene depicted below could easily take place in one of SIL's high tech language facilities such as the Mitla base. Another way to interpret the drawing is in the context of *semana santa,* Holy Week. Easter was on April 3 in 1983, just over a week following the publication of Ortiz Ramírez's cartoon. So, it is not inconceivable that the scene depicts Maundy Thursday as recorded by John 13:1-17 in which Jesus washes the apostles' feet before the Last Supper. This event is an important holy day for Catholics, and it is especially celebrated in Oaxaca with all villagers attending mass together and marching in feast day processions.[441]

indígenas, en la medida que permitamos la perdida de estas culturas estaremos perdiendo todos los mexicanos."

[441] For a recent photographic essay on Holy Thursday's typical celebration in the Zapotec community of Teotitlán del Valle, see Norma Hawthorne, "Maundy Thursday in Oaxaca," April 6, 2012, http://oaxacaculture.com/2012/04/portrait-photography-workshop-maundy-thursday-in-oaxaca/, accessed June 22, 2012.

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Figure 11. Political cartoon celebrating the SIL’s (ILV in Spanish) supposedly imminent departure from Oaxaca. Reproduced from Ortiz Ramírez, *Noticias,* March 22, 1983

Another cartoon by the same artist depicts the SIL (Instituto Lingüístico de Verano/ILV in Spanish) as Satan and President De la Madrid Hurtado (MMH) as the archangel Michael (figure 2). As in the previous one, this cartoon coincides with de la Madrid’s visit to Oaxaca when he had harsh words for the organization. In the cartoon, we see now that the Oaxacan indigenous *campesino* (peasant) is stuck in the middle, impoverished, and in tattered clothes like the indigenous person depicted in the previous cartoon. It is as if the indigenous man is caught in between two powerful (and neither beneficial) forces. Perhaps referencing John’s Revelation in 12:7-9, de la Madrid raises his sword to slay Satan (the SIL) who is hiding behind the wall. The campesino is trying to pull de la Madrid into Oaxaca to deal with the SIL situation. The peasant is suffering from Mexico’s severe economic crisis that began in 1982 and would last most of the 1980s, particularly impacting Oaxaca where the region was also experiencing a major

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agricultural crisis. In the cartoon, the campesino is clutching a document attesting to his bankruptcy, perhaps suggesting that his community is a victim of the SIL's monopoly of the Oaxacan social, religious, and economic arenas.

Figure 12. Political cartoon depicts destitute Oaxacan *campesino* looking to Archangel Michael (President Miguel de la Madrid) to save him from Satan (the SIL). Reproduced from Ortiz Ramírez, *Noticias,* March 23, 1983.

Despite de la Madrid's strong pleas for the SIL to leave Oaxaca during his March 1983 visit and various congressional meetings in 1984, the SIL pressed on in Oaxaca. This presence occasionally garnered protests from organizations aligned with leftist organizations that viewed the SIL as an obstacle to indigenous campesino political organizing. Despite reaffirming the dimportance of preservation of native languages, the SIL rigidly avoided association with grassroots indigenous rights' coalitions that used indigenous identity to frame their challenges to the state throughout the 1970s and

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1980s.[442] As an example, the Oaxacan State Public Security force reported a protest of eighty Mixtecs from Huertilla in Huajuapan de León in Oaxaca City's zócalo.[443] During the June 4, 1984, protest, the Huertilla Mixtecs used a microphone to chant "Out with the Gringos" as they marched with four different banners that demanded the release of political prisoners and solidarity with the OOCR (Revolutionary Peasant-Worker Organization).[444] The protesters especially demanded the release of La Huertilla's municipal president, Zarafin Estrada Zurita, and the immediate departure of the SIL from the Mixteca region.[445]

Despite all the public protests and press campaigns such as the ones described above, Mexico never formally expelled the SIL. The Institution lost one of its key buildings in Mexico City that already belonged to the Mexican government. To improve public relations, the SIL also closed the "Wycliffe Jungle" Camp in Chiapas. Yet, perhaps most damaging, they permanently lost their prestigious textbook contract. Many SIL personnel relocated temporarily to Catalina, Arizona until the fall of 1985. With Mexico's economic crisis at its peak and minimal confidence left in De la Madrid's leadership after his botched handling of the 1985 Mexico City earthquake, the attacks against *imperialismo yanki* faded to the background, and SIL linguists started working again, albeit without Mexican government support.

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[442] See Jeffrey W. Rubin, *Decentering the Regime: Ethnicity, Radicalism, and Democracy in Juchitán, Mexico* (Durham, NC.: Duke University Press, 1997) for an analysis of the radical Zapotec Coalition of Workers, Peasants and Students of the Isthmus (COCEI) in Juchitán.

[443] State Public Security Office, Memorandum to Governor of Oaxaca, June 4, 1984, AGPEO, Box 100, Expediente 160, 1984.

[444] Original Spanish on selected banners: "Solución inmediata a problema de La Huertilla." "No más apoyo al ILV." "Fuera Gringos de Oaxaca." "Basto de engaños al pueblo." "Libertad presos políticos O.O.C.R."

[445] AGEPEO, Box 100, Expediente 160, 1984.

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Indigenous Rights and Language Revitalization

Anthropologist Henning Siverts argued in 1969 that only "romantic intellectuals and certain idealistic absentee politicians" use a shared sense of 'Indianhood' to describe the 800,000 Tzotzil and Tzeltal highland Maya.[446] But this was changing. Encouraged by the slight democratic opening following the 1968 student movement and influenced by "participatory indigenism," indigenous communities asserted demands for self-determination and autonomy in Mexico.[447] In the 1970s, Mexican indigenous rights leaders were in the nascent stage of molding a Pan-indigenous movement. This unification stressed the shared struggles of Native Mexicans. While no actual indigenous people attended the original Barbados Conference, it was the seed for Mexico's First National Congress of Indigenous Peoples in 1975.[448] In 1981, the Coalición Obrera Campesina Estudiantil del Istmo (COCEI), a radical Zapotec political movement based in Juchitán, became the first indigenous party to win control of a municipal government.[449]

Native languages played an important role in indigenous rights movements such as the Zapotec movement in Juchitán.[450] In the 1980s, a new generation of anthropologists and indigenous activists promoted the reclamation and revitalization of

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[446] Henning Siverts, "Ethnic Stability and Boundary Dynamics in Southern Mexico," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference,* Fredrik Barth, ed. (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 1998), 115-116.

[447] Jonathan Fox, Gaspar Rivera, and Lynn Stephen eds., "Indigenous Rights and Self-Determination in Mexico," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 23:1 (Spring, 1999).

[448] See Muñoz, “Populism, Indigenismo, and Indigenous Mobilization," in *Populism in Twentieth Century Mexico*, 122-134, for an in-depth discussion of the Congress' impact on shaping INI policy.

[449] In his study of Zapotec resistance in Juchitán, Oaxaca, Rubin demonstrates that COCEI organizers in the 1970s were models to whom the 1994 Zapatista leaders gave credit. See Rubin, *Decentering the Regime*.

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native languages, cultures, and traditions.[451] INI ethnolinguist Eduardo García Santiago lamented the dearth of publications in Mixtec. In his 1982 *Clases Sociales y Grupos Étnicos en Yosondúa,* he noted that SIL missionaries had published the only local stories and legends written in the Mixtec language. Aside from those publications, nothing of Mixtec history or culture existed in the predominantly Mixtec-speaking Tlaxiaco district.[452] Through the reclamation of indigenous languages, García Santiago hoped for national and international indigenous solidarity.

> When the Indian knows his true history, when he is able to write his own history and reclaim its truth without feeling shame, we will then be able to identify with our true history, and that will be our first step toward the national liberation of Indian people. When we have taken this important step, we can then take the next step which will be the unity of our ethnic group for future relations with Indians all over this country and the world, that way forming a group of ideas that will allow us to fight against the oppression that we've been subjected to.[453]

Santiago García's vision was a noticeable change in conceptualization of indigenous identity, moving from localized to pan-indigenous. However, having a standardized language per ethnic group remains an obstacle for the movements' cohesion considering the vast number and differences in indigenous languages and cultures.

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[450] See Howard Campbell, *Zapotec Renaissance: Ethnic Politics and Cultural Revivalism in Southern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995) for a discussion of COCEI's success in encouraging Zapotec language production.

[451] Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, *México Profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).

[452] Eduardo García Santiago, *Clases Sociales y Grupos Étnicos en Yosondúa,* (INI, 1982), 120-121.

[453] García Santiago, *Clases Sociales,* 99-100. Original Spanish: "Cuando el Indo conozca su verdadero pasado, cuando escriba su historia y reclamar esta verdad de indio sin apenarse, nos habremos identificado ya con nuestra verdad y con eso daremos el primer paso hacia la liberación nacional del pueblo indio. Cuando hayamos dado este paso tan importante, tendremos la seguridad de dar el siguiente que sería la unidad de nuestro grupo étnico, para posteriormente relacionarnos con todos los indios del país y del mundo, formando así un grupo de ideas y pretensiones homogéneas, que será el gran partido indo que luchara contra lo opresión a la que estamos sujetos.

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Ayuujk (Mixe) ethnologist Juan Carlos Reyes Gómez agrees with García Santiago about the lack of native language publications. He also notes the challenges native linguists face. Reyes stated: "As long as it's not us, the actual native speakers, leading language programs, we won't be able to ensure the preservation of our languages."[454] For example, there are dozens of indigenous rights organizations that are currently struggling to agree on a standard alphabet for each of Oaxaca's sixteen ethnic groupings. Reyes Gómez founded a civil society organization dedicated to promoting a standard Mixe language. A challenge they face in the Mixe region of Oaxaca's Sierra Norte is that there are over twenty-two local dialects of Mixe, making it difficult to form one standard alphabet, which is Reyes Gómez's goal. He said the SIL has always opposed that idea because the dialects are sufficiently different that there is a need for separate translations. Reyes Gómez maintains that many of the dialects are different but that they must standardize in order for more publications in Mixe to reach Mixe communities and for bilingual teachers to be able to design better quality in-depth curriculums. Reyes Gómez acknowledged the foundational work the SIL did in valorizing indigenous languages. He noted that when he first trained as a linguist in the late 1980s, he used SIL dictionaries and scholarly publications to understand Mixe syntax and grammar rules. But at the same time, Reyes Gómez argues that the language revitalization movement has to happen from within and not have any obligations to religious affiliations that could serve to divide communities.[455]

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[454] Juan Carlos Reyes Gómez, interview with author, September, 2010. Oaxaca City, Oaxaca. Reyes Gómez is Director of Integral Intercultural Language Academy of Oaxaca and Director of the Department of Mixe Culture in Oaxaca. Original Spanish: "Mientras no seamos nosotros mismos los propios hablantes quienes retomemos este proyecto, no podemos asegurar la preservación de nuestras lenguas."

[455] Juan Carlos Reyes Gómez, interview with author, September, 2010, Oaxaca City, Oaxaca.

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Reyes Gómez's participation in Mixe language preservation organizations brings up a key dilemma that indigenous activists, anthropologists, and the SIL continue to disagree over today. Linguist-activists like Reyes Gómez argue that having twenty-two different dialects of Mixe in Oaxaca prevents a unified Pan-Mixe organization from developing and strengthening Mixe demands to the state and federal governments. The SIL's practice of translating religious and other Mixe literature into dozens of variants contributes to Mixe language disunity. The debate over whether to standardize the individual variants of each of Oaxaca's sixteen distinct indigenous languages is an on-going issue in revitalization movements today.

Founded in Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca in 1989 to preserve the Mixtec language, the independent Ve'e Tu'un Savi (House of the Voice of the Rain) organizes language symposiums to unite Mixtecs from the coast, highlands, and lowlands. Ve'e Tu'un Savi is also transnational by serving Mixtec migrants living in Tijuana and southern California. The organization uses a standardized alphabet for Mixtec's roughly 54 variants.[456] On the other hand, Mixtecs opposed to a uniform alphabet argue that standardization takes away from the important nuances of each dialect. As the Mixtec and Mixe revitalization movements in Oaxaca suggest, language can be a political tool that can concomitantly harm and bolster identity movements.

Since 1951, the SIL has published a volume every four years that keeps a running tally on all living languages in the world.[457] *Ethnologue* was originally designed as a guide for Protestant missionaries learning about rare languages before starting a mission

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[456] Bertha Rodríguez, "Mixtec Alphabet, Ndusu Tu'un Savi," June 7, 2009, http://centrobinacional.org/2009/06/mixtec-alphabet-ndusu-tu%E2%80%99un-savi/, accessed May 10, 2012. Rufino Domínguez Santos, "VIII Congreso de Tu'un Savi," June 13, 2005, http://fiob.org/2005/06/viii-congreso-vee-tuun-savi/, accessed May 10, 2012.

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site. It is now a go-to guide for social workers, health care providers, law enforcement, U.S. state department officials, and anthropologists preparing for field work in new communities. However, what a researcher counts or does not count as a separate language has cultural and political ramifications.[458] In 2005, *Ethnologue* listed fifty-four different indigenous languages in Guatemala, whereas non-SIL Guatemalan linguists had documented eighteen.[459] This drastic difference illustrates a common critique of the SIL that, by dividing language families into so many different dialects, it discouraged pan-ethnic and/or pan-indigenous organizing.

In the highlands of Guatemala modern Mayan political movements want to condense all recognized dialects of the Mayan language into one *lingua franca*: Kaqkchikel. However, a major problem within the Pan-Mayan movement, similar to the one Reyes Gómez mentioned for Mixe in Oaxaca, is deciding which variant to privilege. Which regional Mayan language becomes the archetype for all Mayans to follow? Inevitably, some communities will feel marginalized. Losing one's language has significant cultural and identity implications: affirming one's native language can be a core component of indigenous identity. Should linguists invent a comprehensive dialect that combines aspects of all the languages? The advantage of having one Pan-Mayan language is that it could be recognized as an official language of Guatemala and gain recognition on par with the Spanish language at government functions. There is no way that the Guatemalan government would have the resources or desire to provide official

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[457] http://www.ethnologue.com/info.asp, accessed June 22, 2012.

[458] Michael Erard, "How Linguists and Missionaries Share a Bible of 6,912 Languages," *New York Times,* July 19, 2005.

[459] Erard, "How Linguists and Missionaries Share a Bible," 19.

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documents in dozens of different Mayan languages. Anthropologist Kay B. Warren has traced this debate in her studies on Pan-Mayan activism in Guatemala. Recognizing the power dynamics at stake, she warns: "In the question for standardization, scientific knowledge is playing a key role in the historical reconstruction of tradition and the mediation of what otherwise might be endless disputes between actual communities based on loyalty to place and ancestors."[460] SIL missionary-linguists' application of a scientific formula to languages had deeply significant cultural and political implications.

Conclusion

As this chapter elucidates, the SIL's presence in Oaxaca is long, contested, and complex. Many Oaxacans are surprised they still operate there.[461] In the community of Yosondúa, the expulsion of the SIL in 1977 was publicized as a watershed example of indigenous autonomy and resistance to outside penetration of their community. In Yatzachi, the SIL's long history resulted in a more favorable memory of the organization. This chapter has also demonstrated that the controversial presence of the SIL in Oaxaca shaped a new generation of bilingual educators who believed that language revitalization should come from within the community without any religious strings attached. The SIL's headquarters at Mitla continues its operations, though the playground equipment is rusty and many of the housing units are empty most of the year partly because of new technology. With digital sound recorders and transcription software, many of SIL

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[460] Kay B. Warren, *Indigenous Movements and their Critics: Pan-Maya Activism in Guatemala* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 58-59.

[461] Juan Carlos Reyes Gómez, interview with author, September 2012, Oaxaca City, Oaxaca. Original Spanish: "A mí me sorprendió saber que todavía estaban por acá yo pensé que ya se habían ido."

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linguists are able to finish translation work at the SIL International Center in Dallas, Texas, instead of working on the Mitla Center's outdated IBM computers.

While researching at Mitla's Jaime Torres Bodet Library, I was astonished to find shelf after shelf of New Testament translations in local variations of Mixtec, Zapotec, Mazatec, Triqui, Chinateco, Cuicateco, and Chocho. The language proficiency of the SIL missionaries was impressive. At the same time, I could not help but wonder if SIL's work was ineffective and counterproductive. Translating the New Testament into every single community dialect required a SIL missionary to live in one indigenous community for minimally a decade. The SIL maintains that, by laboriously translating all languages including local variants, the organization is validating and valorizing localized ethno-linguistic identities. However, as this chapter has shown, Pan-Indigenous revitalization movements argue that the SIL's method is impractical and leads to ethnic fragmentation.

Yet as much as INI and SEP bilingual education advocates criticize the quality of SIL translations, they are still often the only dictionaries or primers from marginalized communities in Oaxaca.[462] Of the four former INI bilingual education advocates who I interviewed, three of them affirmed that if it had not been for the SIL, some of the older myths and legends would perhaps have never been recorded. Yet, as mentioned in Cándido Coheto Martínez's interview, because of the Mexican government's reliance on using the SIL for so many decades, INI and SEP was not allocated the funds and support to train larger generations of its own bilingual promoters prior to 1979.

Protestantism breaks down social hierarchies and encourages ordinary community members to lead a Bible study or build a church. Subsequently, mechanisms that keep a

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[462] In *Missionaries of the State,* historian Todd Hartch comes to the same conclusion.

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community running, such as tequio and cargo, are disrupted by Protestant conversion. Yet, as this chapter has also shown, some Protestant converts have found ways to negotiate clashes between tradition and religious conversion. In Yatzachi, Telésforo López Llaguno was initially ridiculed for leaving his religion and giving up drinking. He managed to negotiate cargo responsibilities with his religious values. Protestantism also operated as a valve allowing outsiders (missionaries or INI officials) symbolically and physically to enter traditionally closed villages. This mixed nature of outside intervention was apparent in Yosonduá where a SIL missionary couple's activities threatened authorities concerned with protecting pre-Hispanic sacred spaces. Santiago Ojeda countered that Protestantism actually reinforced indigenous identity by teaching Yosondúans to read in their native tongue.

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Chapter Five: "La invasión de las sectas"

"I would like to meet with you one by one to tell you: come back to the fold of the church, your mother."[463] — Pope John Paul II in Mexico City, 1990

Paracristianos. Sectas. Evangélicos. Neo-Protestantes. Adventistas. Cristianos. Mormones. Hermanos. Católicos. No-católicos. Históricos. Luteros. Romanos. Testigos. Los Aleluyas. Pentecostales. Fundamentalistas. Bíblicas. These terms represent the constantly shifting and contested religious landscape in contemporary Mexico. Non-mainline Protestant and fringe Christian congregations comprise the fastest growing denominations in Mexico.[464] Opponents of these newer Protestant and peripheral Christian denominations pejoratively call them *sectas*, minority religious groups that are divisive and cultish by nature.[465] Yet, as sociologist Bryan Wilson argues, "Few movements regarded as sects by outsiders see themselves as such."[466] Oaxacan evangelical Protestant and fringe Christians refer to themselves interchangeably as *hermanos, evangélicos,* or *cristianos* to emphasize their shared Christian identities and familiar relationship to each other.

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[463] Larry Rohter, "Pope, in Mexico, Faces Rising Protestant Tide," *New York Times,* May 12, 1990.

[464] I define historic/mainline Protestantism to include those churches emerging from the Protestant Reformation in sixteenth century Europe —Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and Anglicans. I understand neo-Protestant groups as Protestant churches and/or beliefs formed in the nineteenth and twentieth century such as Pentecostalism. I interpret fringe or alternative Christian groups as Mormons, Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses; they are Christians or "restorationists" but are not considered Protestants.

[465] In the 2010 Mexican census, Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons were categorized as non-evangelical, bible-based religions. Prior to 2000, Mormons, Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses were lumped together with Protestants. Since I interpret sect as a pejorative term, I will place it in italics when I express how Catholic Oaxacans refer to non-mainline Protestant or non-Protestant Christian groups. Generally, I will use the name of the particular denomination when it is available or use neo-Protestant or fringe Christian to describe non-Catholic Christian religious bodies in Oaxaca.

[466] Bryan R. Wilson, *The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism: Sects and New Religious Movements in Contemporary Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 2.

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Regardless of this contested terminology, the state PRIista government, concerned in the 1980s about *campesino* mobilizations in the Central Valleys, Zapotec radicalism in Juchitán, and the increasing gains of the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) in rural areas, sought to retain its control of indigenous Oaxacan communities by strengthening its commitment to usos y costumbres.[467] However, with the creation of the Federal Department of Religious Affairs (DAR) office in 1976, all Mexican states were expected to mediate instances of religious intolerance. In Oaxaca, the state government vacillated between supporting usos y costumbres and the rights of Protestants. In many cases, the state government ultimately decided that Constitutional law trumped customary law, but this often came too late to make a difference in severe cases of religious conflict. For its part, the Mexican Catholic Church continued to voice its opposition to Protestantism as "la invasión de las sectas" (invasion of the sects) from North America.[468] At the same time, a progressive strain of the Oaxacan episcopacy defended indigenous rights and favored liberation theology while the state government and national episcopacy cracked down on 'communist priests.' It is within this complex and volatile

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[467] See Kathleen McIntyre, *Zapata and Chapulines: Campesino Radicalism in the Central Valleys of Oaxaca, 1971-1978* (Senior Thesis, Vassar College, 2001) for a case study of land invasions initiated by the Coalition of Workers, Peasants, and Students of Oaxaca (COCEO) in the district of Zimatlán.

[468] "La invasión de las sectas" is a phrase used by the institutional Catholic Church and lay Catholics in Latin America to describe the advancement of evangelical Protestantism in the last three decades. See David Stoll, *Is Latin America turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 1-23, offers an excellent overview of evangelical Protestant inroads in Latin America. See also Manuel Guerra Gómez, *Las sectas y su invasión del mundo hispano: una guía* (EUNSA: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 2003), *Sectas en América Latina* (Consejo Episcopal Latino Americano, 1982) and Juan Miguel Ganuza, *Las Sectas nos Invaden* (Ediciones Paulinas, 1983) for condemnations of "las sectas" published by Catholic presses. See Ángel Saldaña, et. al *De sectas a sectas: una aproximación al estudio de un fenómeno apasionante* (Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca: UABJO, 1987) for a collection of papers presented at a 1987 Oaxacan symposium focused on the growth of sects in Oaxaca. The participants ranged from sociologists from Benito Juárez Autonomous University to indigenous community leaders from Zapotec and Chatino communities. The participants argued in almost every paper that sects were destroying Oaxacan communities, but the authors failed to differentiate between denominations, often placing Baptists and Jehovah's Witnesses under the same rubric. Finally, see Alfredo

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milieu that indigenous Oaxacans chose to expel Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses from their communities.

Throughout this chapter, I analyze Oaxacan religious conflicts in the context of major shifts in Oaxacan economic, political, and religious life in the 1980s and early 1990s. I examine how migration and the growth of evangelical Protestant and fringe Christian churches and liberation theology in Oaxaca impacted social organization and local identity in indigenous communities. I pay particular attention to two prolonged religious conflict cases in the Sierra region.[469] I end with discussion of the 1992 religious modifications of the 1917 Mexican Constitution and the 1995 legalization of *usos y costumbres.* I argue that Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses in the Sierra were not just religious dissidents but also agents of sociopolitical change. Their actions challenged Catholic communal rituals but also sought (perhaps indirectly initially) to change their communities' ethos as a whole. Converting to *las sectas* defied community adhesion much more saliently than the conversion to mainline Protestantism as observed in Chapters Two and Three. Indigenous collective rights were now at the forefront of the progressive Catholic Church in southern Mexico. *Sectas* threatened not only Catholicism, but also indigenous solidarity in the face of increasing state repression throughout Latin America, which often led to migration to the United States.

Migration

Indigenous Oaxacans outnumber mestizos exponentially in terms of migration to the United States. While the state of Oaxaca is ranked sixth in migration to the United

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Silletta *Las Sectas Invaden La Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Contrapunto, 1986) for a South American example.

[469] See map of the regions of Oaxaca in Appendix B.

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States, Oaxaca is number one in indigenous migration; Zapotecs are the largest ethnic group in all of Mexico to migrate.[470] Migration is, in anthropologist Cristina Velásquez's phrase, "an agent of sociopolitical change."[471] Similarly, I contend that religious conversion is also an agent for sociopolitical change.[472] Rejecting traditional obligations like tequio and cargo has effectively altered community dynamics. However, while many Catholic migrants managed to strengthen indigenous identity and hence Catholic rituals through migration, evangelical and Alternative Christians challenged a core element of indigenous communal identity: syncretic Catholicism.[473]

By the mid-1960s, Oaxacan migrants headed to Baja California to work in the San Quintín Valley's agro-export industry or to work in Tijuana's nascent *maquiladoras*. In the 1970s, Oaxaca's agricultural crisis particularly impacted indigenous communities.[474] For example, historian Joel Simon's research indicates areas in the Mixteca where the cost of the fertilizer required for a small *milpa* (corn plot) often exceeded the market

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[470] María Cristina Velásquez, "Migrant Communities, Gender, and Political Power in Oaxaca," in Jonathan Fox and Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, eds., *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States* (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 2004), 483.

[471] Velásquez, "Migrant Communities, Gender, and Political Power," 486.

[472] See Alicia Barabas and Miguel Bartolomé, "Los sistemas normativos frente a las nuevas alternativas religiosas en Oaxaca," in Barabas and Bartolomé eds., *Dinámicas culturales: Religiones y migración en Oaxaca* (Oaxaca City: Centro INAH, 2010), 110, for a brief discussion on the connection between temporal migration to the United States and the spread of Pentecostal churches in Oaxaca.

[473] I use the terms 'alternative' and 'fringe' Christians interchangeably to describe Adventists, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses. I want to acknowledge that while they are indeed Christians, their beliefs and practices put them outside the parameters of mainstream Christianity. For the recent political-religious debate over whether Mormons are Christians, see David S. Reynolds, "Why Evangelicals don't like Mormons," *New York Times*, January 25, 2012.

[474] See Joel Simon, "Crisis in el Campo," 35-59, in *Endangered Mexico: An Environment on the Edge* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1997), for a discussion of the failed "Green Revolution" in Mexico. Simon demonstrates that President Luis Echeverría's support of chemical fertilizers for southern Mexico was a death sentence for Oaxacan agriculture; the land became depleted and eroded within just a few annual harvests.

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value of the corn itself.[475] As Mexico's foreign debt soared and southern Mexico's agricultural crisis worsened, Oaxacan migration to the United States accelerated.[476] The choice for indigenous Oaxacans, anthropologist Michael Kearney aptly stated, was "migrate or starve."[477]

Oaxaca has long been the poorest and most indigenous state in the Mexican Republic, closely followed by Chiapas.[478] In the 1980 federal INEGI census, 70% of Oaxacans identified as indigenous. That same census documented that 75% of indigenous Oaxacan communities lacked running water, electricity, and proper drainage while unemployment rates topped 30%.[479] In the Mixteca, agricultural laborers worked twelve-hour days throughout most of the year, earning barely enough to purchase beans and tortillas, let alone meat.[480] Journalist Eric Schlosser notes that in 1995 Mixtec strawberry pickers paid below the minimum wage in California's Santa María Valley still earned

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[475] Simon, *Endangered Mexico*, 37-38.

[476] Alan Riding, "Inflation, the Scourge of Latin America, Takes Hold in Mexico; Domestic Ills, *New York Times,* August 2, 1974. Riding, "Mexico's Gloomy Economy," *New York Times,* April 12, 1982. See Olga Montes, "Los conflictos religiosos en Oaxaca: una aproximación a su estudio" in *Persecución Religiosa en Oaxaca? Los Nuevos Movimientos Religiosos.* Oaxaca (México: Instituto Oaxaqueño de las Culturas, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociológicas de la UABJO, 1995), 28-35 for an argument on the inverse correlation between the failing agricultural sector and the rise of Protestantism. See Joseph A. Whitt, Jr., "The Mexican Peso Crisis," in *Economic Review* (January/February 1996). See also Marilyn Gates**,** *In default: peasants, the debt crisis, and the agricultural challenge in Mexico* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993) for a case study of the agricultural crisis stemming from the debt crisis in Campeche, Mexico. Finally, see Judith Teichman, *Policy-making in Mexico: From Boom to Crisis* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1988) for a background to Mexico's national recession during the Miguel de la Madrid 1982-1988 administration.

[477] Eric Schlosser, "In the Strawberry Fields," *The Atlantic,* (November 1995). http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1995/11/in-the-strawberry-fields/5754/ , accessed June 1, 2012.

[478] See Arthur D. Murphy and Alex Stepick, *Social Inequality in Oaxaca: A History of Resistance and Change* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991) for a background to the socio-economic demographics in rural Oaxaca during the 1980s.

[479] INEGI, *X Censo de Población y Vivienda,* 1980.

[480] Carlos Durand Alcántara, *La lucha campesina en Oaxaca y Guerrero, 1978-1987* (Costa-Amic Editores, 1989), 152.

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more in a day than what they could in one month in their home villages.[481] According to a 2003 study on Mexican migration to the United States, 86% of Oaxacan migrants live in California.[482] The population of Oaxacans in California swelled so high in the 1980s that anthropologist Michael Kearney coined the term "Oaxacalifornia" to describe the transnational migrant community.[483]

Kearney argues that it was within this space that indigenous Oaxacans strengthened their own indigenous identity by founding rights organizations with other Zapotecs or Mixtecs from Oaxaca. Similarly, as I argue in this dissertation, Protestants abstaining from religious rituals threaten and often alter social structure in their home communities. Yet, by doing so, they strengthen and share their own identities as *cristianos* with indigenous peoples from other communities, as well as with mestizos and foreigners. The formation of this transnational identity mirrored trends in the United States as well. Migrating to the United States meant encountering a multi-religious nation. Protestants currently make up over 50% of the U.S. population, Catholics perhaps

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[481] Schlosser, "In the Strawberry Fields," http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1995/11/in-the-strawberry-fields/5754/

[482] Jorge Durand and Douglas Massey, *Clandestinos: Migración México-Estados Unidos en los albores del siglo XXI* (México, DF: Porrúa, 2003*),* 142*,* cited in Barabas and Bartolomé, *Dinámicas Culturales,* 43.

[483] Fox, "Indigenous Mexican Migrants," 174. See Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, "Welcome to Oaxacalifornia," in *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 23:1 (Spring, 1999) for background to indigenous Oaxacan transborder political and labor organizing in the 1980s and 1990s. Finally, see Carole Nagengast and Michael Kearney, "Mixtec Ethnicity: Social Identity, Political Consciousness and Political Activism," *Latin American Research Review* 25:2 (1990): 61-91 for an analysis on how indigenous Oaxacans use their ethnic identity to unite and protest deplorable living and working conditions in northern Mexico and California.

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25% of the population.[484] Today ten percent of New Yorkers are Pentecostals, of whom one-third are Latinos.[485]

At the same time, remittances from migrants are, after tourism, Oaxaca's greatest revenue.[486] For communities with small populations, remittances can both bolster and potentially destroy community adhesion.[487] Remittances help with local development projects (building a road, church renovation, irrigation) and also reaffirm the importance of the patron saint fiestas by sponsoring key aspects of it and/or timing their returns to the village to coincide with the town's fiesta.[488] Migrants with more cash flow than typical villagers also contribute to the growing competition over *quinceañera* and wedding celebrations.[489]

Oaxacan migration to other regions of Mexico and the United States during the 1970s and 1980s helped pave the way for conversion to evangelical Protestantism. Journalist Sam Quinones described the popularity of Protestantism in Mixtec

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[484] http://religions.pewforum.org/reports 2007, accessed June 14, 2012.

[485] David Gonzalez, "House Afire: A Sliver of a Storefront, a Faith on the Rise," *New York Times,* January 14, 2007.

[486] See Jeffrey H. Cohen, "Transnational Migration in Rural Oaxaca, Mexico: Dependency, Development, and the Household," in *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 103, No. 4 (December, 2001), 954-967, for background on how remittances are allocated in a Zapotec community.

[487] See Leah K. VanWey, "Community Organization, Migration and Remittances in Oaxaca," in *Latin American Research Review* 40:1 (February, 2005): 83-107, for a quantitative study on the economic and political impact of remittances to Zapotec Communities.

[488] See Stephen, *Transborder Lives,* 48-59 for a discussion of how migration cycles impacted *mayordomías.*

[489] See Alison Mountz, "Daily Life in the Transnational Migrant Community of San Augustín Yatareni and Poughkeepsie, New York," Diaspora 5: 3 (Winter, 1996):416-417 for an analysis of *fiesta* competition in a Zapotec migrant-sending community. See also Toomas Gross, "Farewell to Fiestas and Saints? Changing Catholic Practices in Contemporary Rural Oaxaca," *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* 3:1 (2009) for an argument that the *fiesta* system in Oaxaca is actually growing in symbolic and physical importance due to the rise of Protestant churches. Finally, see Jeffrey H. Cohen, "Transnational Migration in Rural Oaxaca, Mexico: Dependency, Development, and the Household," *American Anthropologist*, 103:4 (Dec., 2001), 954-967 for his survey on a Zapotec migrant sending village where expenditures on fiestas or luxury items such as televisions was relatively low compared to the home improvements and business opportunities available for returning migrants with savings.

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communities along the U.S.-Mexican border: "The new churches are symbols of economic success, of modernity, of the monumental power and attraction of the United States. The adoption of a Protestant faith is almost standard issue in leaving Oaxaca for a future."[490] Once away from their traditional villages, Oaxacans living in Tijuana often had to adjust to different legal codes and a plethora of religious worship options. Luis Guerrero from the Mixtec village of Santa María Asunción described that it was not until he left Oaxaca that he understood the difference between constitutional rights and religious rituals. Guerrero stated:

> Earthly law allows you to speak up for your rights with the police, the bosses. That's why I put forth an effort to learn it. In the villages people don't have education. The local authorities pressure them to fulfill tradition. They want them to put on traditional parties. In Oaxaca you can't give your children education because the little money you earn you have to spend it on parties for the saints. Our children have no shoes because of tradition. We came here to leave all that behind.[491]

Quinones's essay on conversion at the border also conveys how Protestantism was not just a spiritual choice; migration paired with conversion meant a rupture in traditional social organization. While absentee villagers faced peer pressure to return to their communities when it was their turn to serve prestigious positions (such as mayordomo of the fiesta or town mayor), they could also potentially send money in place of service, or they could decide not to support traditional fiestas.[492] Migration changed hierarchies and status in the community and brought new ways of thinking about

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[490] Sam Quinones, *True Tales from Another Mexico: The Lynch Mob, the Popsicle Kings, Chalino, and the Bronx* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 110.

[491] Quinones, *True Tales from Another Mexico,* 111.

[492] Michael Kearney and Federico Besserer discuss the use of substitutes to fulfill cargo positions. However, they underline the fact that many communities still prefer that the migrant physically return to the village to fulfill his obligation. See Kearney and Besserer, "Oaxacan Municipal Governance in Transnational Context," in *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*, 452-453.

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economic investments that might benefit individuals rather than the whole community.[493] At the same time, in communities where participation in tequio was followed rigidly, municipal leaders had the authority to sanction dissenters (whether for religious reasons or migratory status). Rights to many basic services in indigenous communities governed by usos y costumbres are considered a privilege, not a right, for residents. A migrant would still want to retain those rights if he planned to return to his native village or if he left family members behind. Today, 40% of native-born Oaxacans have worked at some point in the United States.[494] But, for important rites of passage (baptism of children, marriage, burial), they come back to the village.[495] I am not, however, suggesting that Protestantism and migration always go together.[496] Rather, some of the types of local and global factors that led Oaxacans to migrate often were the same influences that led them to convert: poverty and exposure to new markets and ways of thinking. Oaxacans who both migrated and converted to Protestantism could experience both spiritual and social repercussions.

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[493] James C. Scott's article "Prestige as the Public Discourse of Domination" *Cultural Critique* 12 (Spring, 1989): 145-166, suggests that while wealth can run out, the person's respected status in the community does not. Hence, status, not wealth, is still more important for maintaining prestige in one's community.

[494] Jeffrey H. Cohen, *The Culture of Migration in Southern Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 6.

[495] See Alicia Barabas and Miguel Bartolomé, "Los que se van al Norte: La migración indígena en Oaxaca," in Barabas and Bartolomé eds., *Dinámicas culturales: Religiones y migración en Oaxaca* (Oaxaca City: Centro INAH, 2010), for recent statistics on internal and external Oaxacan migration.

[496] Gastón Espinosa notes that of the 7.5% of the Mexican population who have migrated to the United States, 15% of them are Protestant in his article "Brown Moses: Francisco Olazábal and Mexican American Pentecostal Healing in the Borderlands," in Espinosa and Mario T. García, eds., *Mexican American Religions: Spirituality, Activism, and Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 384. His research on Latino Pentecostalism in the US also suggests that Mexican migrants are being converted by Mexican American Pentecostals with their own churches, not by Anglo-Americans as is popularly suggested in scholarship. Rather, Espinosa posits, "There is also a long tradition of indigenous, independent, and autonomous Latino Protestant churches that are completely run by and for the Mexican American and Latino community, 289.

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In another sense, migration can mean freedom from village boundaries and expectations. Geographer Alison Mountz argues that “dissenters” from the Zapotec community of San Augustín Yatareni who criticized the labor and financial expenses associated with tequio and cargo use migration to Poughkeepsie, New York as an escape valve. Once free from the tequio and cargo restrictions, ‘dissenter’ migrants focus on individual, not collective, advancement. The same can be true of religious conversion. For example, in Yatareni, Seventh Day Adventists make up a large percentage of the migrants who criticize the “*quema de dinero*” or “burning of money” on fiestas. By questioning every aspect of existing social structure in Yatareni, Adventists are stigmatized even more than men who leave their village wives for American girlfriends or stop sending money home to their families.[497] In Yatareni, Catholics relegate Adventists to the lowest cargos and the most onerous tequio assignments. Mountz notes that Adventists struggle to balance their religious commitments while retaining community respect, which mostly is judged upon tequio performance and cargo participation, many of which are related to Catholic Church activities the Adventists no longer support.[498]

Religious Conflicts

Religious traditions permeate most aspects of indigenous life in Oaxaca. In colonial times, priests visited the communities to perform important sacraments, but it was the locals, particularly the sponsors of religious festivals, who cultivated an intimate

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[497] Mountz, “Daily Life in the Transnational Migrant Community,” 422-423.

[498] Seventh Day Adventists are classified as Biblical and non-evangelical in the Mexican census along with Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses. Adventists do not work on Saturdays so this has impacted their ability to complete weekend *tequio* assignments. Jehovah’s Witnesses do not celebrate any type of religious, familial, or civil holiday celebrations.

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version of folk Catholicism.[499] *Cofradías* (brotherhoods) have a long history in Oaxaca. Beginning with the Dominican led spiritual conquest of Oaxaca in the 1560s, these confraternities collected funds to organize patron saint day feasts.[500] Along with the political *cabildo* (municipal council), cofradías had helped indigenous communities carve out a small degree of autonomy under colonialism. This religious and political organization persisted in many indigenous communities to this day; Protestantism questions this organization.

In the 2010 Mexican census, Protestantism was divided into two categories: Historical or Reformed and Pentecostal/Evangelical/Christian. Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses were listed in a separate category distinct from Protestantism under the rubric as non-Evangelical and biblically oriented.[501] Oaxacan Pentecostals grew from 113,941 in 2000 to 167,409 in 2010, an impressive 47% growth. Considering that the total number of Oaxacans practicing a historic Protestant faith (such as Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, or Nazarene) totaled just 32,696 in 2010, Pentecostals alone are five times the size of all historic Protestants in Oaxaca combined.

Jehovah's Witnesses are also growing fast. After the United States, Mexico has the largest Jehovah's Witness population in the world.[502] The first Jehovah's Witness

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[499] Enrique Marroquín, *El Botín Sagrado: La Dinámica Religiosa en Oaxaca* (Oaxaca de Juárez: UABJO, 1992), 45 and 56-60.

[500] Kevin Gosner, "Religion and Rebellion in Chiapas," 57, in Susan Schroeder ed., *Native Resistance and the Pax Colonial in New Spain* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

[501] INEGI's classification of religious categories is constantly evolving. As of 2010, Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses are classified as biblically based religions despite having nineteenth century roots. These denominations do base much of their religion on the Bible. However, these denominations also supplement biblical scripture with other foundational books, i.e. *The Book of Mormon*, or have revised the Bible to fit some of their core beliefs as the Jehovah's Witnesses did. Many Protestant leaders argue that Catholics are over- counted in the census since most Mexicans identify as Catholic even if they don't attend mass.

[502] De la Torre, "Testigos de Jehová," in *Atlas de la Diversidad Religiosa en México,* 74.

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Salón del Reino (Kingdom Hall) was founded in Oaxaca City in 1955.[503] In 2010, there were 58,000 Jehovah's Witnesses counted in the Oaxacan census, representing a 55% increase from 2000.[504] Compared in that same INEGI census to Adventists at 34,101 and Mormons at 10, 222, Jehovah's Witnesses are the largest fringe Christian religion in Oaxaca. Jehovah's Witnesses also merit special attention because their core beliefs are radically different to both mainline and evangelical Protestant denominations. While they are classified in the census as a biblically based religion, Witnesses are on the margins of Christianity. Fringe denominations such as Jehovah's Witnesses challenge not just religious norms but also civil government, school districts, and healthcare providers. Witnesses, for the most part, do not donate blood or accept transfusions, celebrate civil or religious holidays, enroll in the military, participate in electoral elections, or salute the national flag.[505]

Many evangelical ministers argue that converts from Catholicism were not practicing orthodox Catholicism in the first place, so they were not really leaving the Church. In many evangelicals' opinion, Catholics misinterpret true scripture and practice a paganistic form of Christianity by worshiping images of the saints, the Virgin Mary, and the crucifix in their homes. In addition, they are perceived as wasting money on candles, flowers, and alcohol in their communal rituals—la quema de dinero. Neo-

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[503] Alicia Barabas and Miguel Bartolomé, "Introducción: Pluralidad Cultural y Complejidad Social en Oaxaca," in Barabas and Bartolomé eds., *Dinámicas culturales: Religiones y migración en Oaxaca* (Oaxaca de Juárez: Centro INAH Oaxaca, 2010), 15.

[504] INEGI, *XIII Censo de Población y Vivienda, 2010.*

[505] I say "generally" because Jehovah's Witnesses are also advised to follow their consciences in making personal decisions.

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Protestants themselves often derisively call Catholics *romanos* to emphasize their connection to the Vatican, not Christ.[506]

It is difficult to measure whether it is spiritual or material rewards that influence indigenous peoples in their decision to convert to evangelical Protestantism.[507] As anthropologist June Nash has shown, joining a *secta* can offer tremendous personal benefits. Nash noted that the desire to stop drinking fueled many Guatemalan Mayans' decision to convert: "For some Protestant converts who were particularly plagued by this problem, joining a Protestant sect was analogous to becoming a member of Alcoholics Anonymous."[508] Similarly, sociologist Sheldon Annis has demonstrated in Guatemala that Mayans often converted to Protestantism to avoid paying a costly "Catholic Cultural Tax."[509] Additionally, joining a Pentecostal church or Kingdom Hall, while still highly vertical in organization, gave opportunities to younger men—and in some cases women—to lead a congregation, hence earning prestige that would have taken them decades to earn in the traditional cargo ladder.

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[506] This was also the case when historic Protestant missionaries first made inroads in Oaxaca in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Baptist Minister Samuel Juárez García's used references to "*los Romanos*" in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

[507] There is a long debate among scholars whether Latin Americans are rapidly converting to Protestantism for material or spiritual rewards. See Amy Sherman, *The Soul of Development* (New York: Oxford Press, 1997) and Sheldon Annis, *God and Production in a Guatemalan Town* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), for arguments about the economic incentives of converting to Protestantism. See Elizabeth Brusco, *The Reformation of Machismo: Evangelical Conversion and Gender in Colombia* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1995) and June Nash, "Protestantism in an Indian Village in the Western Highlands of Guatemala," *Alpha Kappa Deltan: A Sociological Journal* (Winter: 1960): 49-53, for arguments that conversion to Protestantism decreases alcoholism and reduces domestic violence. See David Stoll, *Between Two Armies in the Ixil Towns of Guatemala* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), and Virginia Garrard-Burnett, *Protestantism in Guatemala: Living in the New Jerusalem* (Austin: University of Texas Press,1998), for arguments that religious conversion provided a psychological escape and, at times, physical protection from state repression in Guatemala.

[508] June Nash, "Protestantism in an Indian Village in the Western Highlands of Guatemala," *Alpha Kappa Deltan: A Sociological Journal* (Winter, 1960): 50.

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Yet, conversion could come at a steep price. In 1976, the DAR in Oaxaca, a federal entity with offices in all 31 states, began to investigate charges of religious intolerance aggressively. The department was created to efficiently adjudicate religious conflicts and keep track of religious building permits, saving the Mexican Attorney General's office from being saturated with religious intolerance cases. Between 1976 and 1992, the Oaxacan office documented 352 reported cases of religious intolerance in Oaxaca.[510] These cases ranged from verbal attacks to destruction of property to death threats and homicide. Jehovah's Witnesses precipitated 24% of the conflicts while Pentecostals constituted 38% of the total number of conflicts.[511] However, the number of Jehovah's Witness and Pentecostal conflicts may very well have been higher because, in many of the remaining cases, the descriptions *evangélico, secta,* or *protestante* were used but without specifying denomination.[512] In the formal complaints submitted to DAR during the 1980s, tradition, respect for municipal authority and threats from outsiders are the familiar premises used to protest the growth of the *sectas.*

As demonstrated in Chapter Three, the complaints about tequios' religious assignments dealt with Evangelicals' refusal to help repair local Catholic Churches. While the majority of complaints against tequio in the 1980s cited religious beliefs, not

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[509] Sheldon Annis, "The Production of Christians: Catholics and Protestants in a Guatemalan Town," in Virginia Garrard-Burnett ed., *On Earth as It Is in Heaven: Religion in Modern Latin America* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 2000), 197.

[510] Enrique Marroquín, *El conflicto religioso: Oaxaca, 1976-1992* (México, D.F.: UNAM, 2007), 54. Sociologist Marroquín was the first researcher to analyze DAR's original data. I am using Marroquín's synthesis of the data when I offer statistics on the percentage of cases that were attributed to Jehovah's Witnesses and Pentecostals. The DAR no longer has a public archive. All conflict cases housed in the DAR were transferred to the Oaxaca State and Judicial archives beginning in 2000. Between 2008 and 2010, I examined cases listed as religious and/or agrarian conflicts at the Oaxaca State and Judicial archives.

[511] Marroquín, *El conflicto religioso,* 54-55.

[512] Marroquín, 53-54.

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all the cases are about religious incompatibility with tequio. The 1980s reveal a shifting interest in individual rights, the entrance of capitalism into village economies, and globalization. This section examines the opposition by individuals to tequio assignments before focusing on religiously based conflict cases.

Individualism, territorial boundaries, and capitalism all broke down the centrality of tequio in many Oaxacan communities in the 1980s. For example, in 1982, Jenaro Ramírez Ríos complained that he did not want to be treated like a *peón*, a physical laborer.[513] A resident of the Mixteca Alta community of San José Ayuquila, Huajuapan de León, Ramírez Ríos explained to governor Pedro Vásquez Colmenares that he contributed funds annually for community development projects. He resented being ordered to do physical labor once a week when he already did his part for the community. Ramírez Ríos, himself a former mayor of San José Ayuquila, asked the governor how his predecessor, Eliseo Jiménez Ruíz, would feel if Vásquez Colmenares asked him to labor as a peón after serving six years as governor of Oaxaca. To further his characterization of tequio service as onerous, he also mentioned that the mayor of San José Ayuquila ordered elderly female residents to do tequio service, a practice he considered to be reprehensible

In another case, in the Zapotec district of Tlacolula, Manuel Bautista Aguilar complained to state authorities that he was required to perform tequio in his native town, Teotitlán del Valle, Tlacolula, but also in San Francisco Tutla, a small village just outside of Oaxaca City where he had purchased a small parcel of land for his daughter. In his complaint to Tutla authorities, Bautista Aguilar argued that his teenage daughter was not able to do physical labor and should be exempted altogether from the tequio. Instead, San

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Francisco Tutla reassigned the tequio responsibility to him, despite the fact that he resided in Teotitlán. He now had two concurrent tequio obligations, which made it difficult for him to commute the thirty kilometers daily to sell his hand-woven *sarapes* (blankets) in Oaxaca City's market. Bautista Aguilar worked independently selling his textiles and did quite well, as is evidenced by his ability to invest in property closer to Oaxaca City. Serving in daylong tequios took him away from the job that provided for his family. To that end, he asked the Teotitlán authorities to exempt him from all tequios. Although he opted out for professional reasons, his justification had much in common with evangelical opposition to customary laws as mentioned in Chapter Three. He argued that the federal Mexican Constitution made no mention of customary law and he labeled tequio as comparable to Mexico's pre-revolutionary exploitative hacienda labor systems.[514] In this example, Bautista Aguilar was a professional weaver who saw mobility as a way to improve his life and the traditions of these communities were pulling him back. The entrance of capitalism and globalization into these villages caused resentments and friction.

Since independence and especially after the Mexican Revolution and the advent of *ejidal* land distribution, territorial boundaries were constantly in dispute and often led to violent inter-and intra-village conflicts. Ausencio Ramírez Gijon in the coastal district of Juquila complained that, as a resident of one of the *rancherías* (small villages) of San Juan Lachao municipality, he should not have to complete tequios that only benefitted the

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[513] Jenaro Ramírez Ríos to Governor Pedro Vásquez Colmenares, November 30, 1981. "Relacionados con Tequios" 1/131.7/ (1-30) 82/333. Archivo General del Poder Judicial de Oaxaca, hereafter AGEPEO.

[514] Manuel Bautista Aguilar to Municipal Authority, San Francisco Tutla, March 23, 1982. AGEPEO.

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*cabecera municipal (*the county seat).[515] His complaint speaks to the fragmented and constantly shifting boundaries of municipalities that increased in the 1970s with more land distributions resulting from President Luis Echeverría's agrarian reform policy.[516] Ramírez Gijon's *ranchería*, Armonía, legally pertained to San Juan Lachao but had little interaction or history with the municipal seat.[517] He felt that the municipal government's reliance on the outer village was excessive and unjust to his family, who would never reap the benefits of the collective tequios commissioned for the township's center.

Issues of tradition continued to dominate conflict cases of the 1980s, as occurred in the 1950s and 1960s. Yet, in contrast, the 1980s' conflicts also dealt with the onslaught of new *sectas* and non-mainline groups. In the Zapotec town of Santiago Choapan, municipal mayor Efraín Cruz Orozco explained to the Oaxacan Secretary of State Carlos Hernández Underwood on January 29, 1982: "We have a careful agreement in this town that there is no other religion than the one that's already here."[518] He added that new religious groups brought divisions and conflicts because they did not contribute to tequio assignments or serve positions along the cargo hierarchical ladder. Most significantly, he complained that *secta* (he did not specify denomination) members went door to door each week handing out religious "propaganda," something never done before in his community. With the proliferation of fringe Christian denominations in 1980s Oaxaca,

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[515] Ausencio Ramírez Gijon to Mayor Hipoleto García Pacheco of San Lachao, May 20,1982. AGEPEO, Característica #118, Expediente #161, 1982.

[516] See Philip A. Dennis, *Intervillage Conflict in Oaxaca* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1987), for a solid analysis of agrarian conflicts in the central valleys of Oaxaca.

[517] See Dennis, *Intervillage Conflict,* 127-148, for a discussion of similar conflicts regarding *agencia* rights in the Zapotec district of Etla.

[518] Efraín Cruz Orozco to Oaxacan Secretary General in AGAO, "Relacionados con Tequios" 1/131.7/ (1-30) 82/333, January 29, 1982. Original Spanish: "Porque en esta población, hay un acuerdo de Ciudadanos que ya no haya otra religión que la que ya está."

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house calls were becoming a common pattern in communities' religious tapestries. Within this growth trajectory, the highest conversion percentages were to Pentecostal and fundamental denominations (Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Adventists), known as biblically based non-Evangelical in the Mexican census. In other cases, complaints to the state government were ostensibly about tequio but really were reactions to the social and cultural changes corresponding with rapid religious change.

San Juan Juquila, Mixes[519]

San Juan Juquilans trace the community's first exposure to Protestantism when a SIL missionary arrived to translate the Bible into the Mixe language in 1937.[520] Many of the earliest Protestants remember playing basketball with missionary Walter S. Miller's sons and learning to read in Bible study class.[521] For decades, Miller was the lone missionary in San Juan Mixes; transportation to Oaxaca City took a few days by horse since most of the roads were impassable by truck. Since the 1970 completion of a highway connecting San Juquila Mixes more directly with Oaxaca City and Ixtepec in the isthmus, Pentecostal, Adventist, and Jehovah's Witness *hermanos* visited the community

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[519] San Juan Juquila, Mixes, is a municipality located in the northern part of the district of Yautepec in the Sierra Sur region of Oaxaca, bordering just south of the Sierra Norte district of Mixes. The Sierra Sur region of Oaxaca is south of the Sierra Norte, south of the Central Valleys and bordered by La Costa region to the west and the Isthmus region to the east.

[520] SIL missionary Walter S. Miller stayed in the community for two decades before moving onto another Mixe community where he stayed until his death in 1978. He was a well-respected publisher on Mixe linguistics and often served as a guide for anthropologists and the occasional mycologists seeking María Sabina's magic mushrooms. See Miller, "El tonalamatl mixe y los hongos sagrados," in *Summa Antropológica,* México, INAH (1966): 317-328, "La lengua mixe o ayuc," in *Investigaciones Lingüísticas* 4:130-33 (1937), and *Cuentos Mixes* (Biblioteca de folklore indígena, INI: 1956). For a general report on religious conflicts in the Mixe region written for a missionary audience, see CIMAC, "Acelerado crecimiento del cristianismo evangélico en México," May 14, 2001, http://www.cimac.org.mx/noticias/semanal01/s01050201.html, accessed June 1, 2012.

[521] Ladislao Domínguez, "Origen de la iglesia evangélica en la región Mixe," June 29, 2010, http://jonathancruz747.blogspot.com/2010/06/una-historia-en-nada-conocida.html, accessed June 1, 2012.

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more frequently.[522] At the same time, young teenagers in the 1970s started to leave San Juquila Mixes to go to high school in neighboring towns or in Oaxaca City.[523] By 1980, there were 800 Catholics and approximately 60 Jehovah's Witnesses in San Juan Juquila.[524]

San Juan Juquila is a prime example of a conflict over *secta* non-participation in tequios that benefitted the Catholic Church. In the early 1980s, an active Jehovah's Witness minority refused to participate in some key tequio assignments. The municipal government responded by fining the Jehovah's Witnesses, incarcerating some of them, and, finally, by threatening to expel all Jehovah's Witnesses from the community. The Oaxacan state government sided with the Jehovah's Witnesses but ultimately could do little to change the town's social and religious mores.

In a March 24, 1981 letter to Governor Pedro Vásquez Colmenares, San Juan Juquila mayor Félix Tiburcio Espina complained that Jehovah's Witnesses in his town destroyed community social adhesion.[525] He stated: "As you know, for centuries our communities have cherished a practice of free service in which the residents collaborate in activities that are of importance to the town."[526] Tiburcio Espina argued that without

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[522] Frank Lipp, *The Mixe of Oaxaca: Religion, Ritual, and Healing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), 147.

[523] Ladislao Domínguez, "Una historia en nada conocida," *Hablando en un voz alto,* June 29, 2010, http://jonathancruz747.blogspot.com/2010/06/una-historia-en-nada-conocida.html, accessed June 6, 2012.

[524] Saúl Jiménez Crispin to Justiniano Carballido González, Attorney General, Oaxaca, February 15, 1982, Dependencia: Asuntos Agrarios, Expediente: San Juan Juquila Mixes, Yautepec, Oaxaca. AGEPEO.

[525] Félix Tiburcio Espina to Governor Pedro Vásquez Colmenares, March 24, 1981. AGEPEO, 1981.

[526] Tiburcio Espina to Vásquez Colmenares, March 24, 1981. AGEPEO, 1981, 140.162.6. Original Spanish: "Que nuestro pueblo hace siglos que vienen colaborando y desempeñando cargos y comisiones,

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tequio his administration would be unable to offer basic services to town residents. Tiburcio Espina concluded that since the state and federal governments did not provide sufficient funds for basic services, his town would be in dire straits without the full participation of all San Juan Juquila residents in tequio. While Tiburcio Espina acknowledged that the Mexican Constitution protected San Juan residents, he argued that tequio was not about law, but about tradition. He stated: "Mr. Governor, centuries before the Mexican Constitution even existed, there has been a tradition of this kind of exchange in the indigenous communities of Oaxaca."[527] Without full cooperation of all *ciudadanos,* the municipal government, he claimed, would "suffer a severe collapse."[528]

The municipal authorities based their opposition to the Jehovah's Witnesses on the familiar premises seen in Chapter Three: tradition, respect for government, and threats from outsiders.[529] The difference is that San Juan Juquila was rapidly losing its government support; Oaxacan state officials consistently sided with the Witnesses despite the authorities' accusations that the Witnesses were "*anarquistas.*"[530] On April 22, 1981, Carlos Hernández Underwood, Oaxaca's Secretary of State, sent a memo to state investigator Jesus Martínez Álvarez to examine the municipal mayor's charges against the Jehovah's Witnesses. Álvarez passed the case onto DAR.

The municipal authorities wrote another letter of complaint on February 4, 1982, responding to DAR's proposed mediation session. Tiburcio Espina complained that the

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que tenemos por trascendencia y costumbre que nuestros ancestros nos dejaron, hemos venido trabajando en TEQUIO COMUNITARIO."

[527] Tiburcio Espina to Vásquez Colmenares, March 24, 1981. AGEPEO, 1981, 140.162.6.

[528] Ibid. Original Spanish, "sufrir un grave colapse."

[529] Ibid., April 22, 1981. AGEPEO, 1981, 140.162.6.

[530] Tiburcio Espina, et. al, to Vásquez Colmenares. February 4, 1982. AGEPEO, 1982, 140.162.6.

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Jehovah's Witness men used religion "like a trampoline" so that they did not have to contribute to collective work projects such as the road the town was currently building.[531] For Tiburcio Espina, it was not a matter of his office ignoring Article 24 (which guaranteed religious freedom) of the Constitution but rather a case of the witnesses not contributing to road projects that benefitted the whole community.[532]

Later that month, Tiburcio Espina framed the conflict in San Juan Juquila Mixes as a case of powerful Witness outsiders taking advantage of indigenous peoples. He described himself as a humble and illiterate indigenous man who had worked his way up the cargo ladder through dedication to his town and loyalty to the PRI government. He threatened to resign from his position and hand in the keys to the governor if the Jehovah's Witnesses did not leave the community. Tiburcio Espina stated: "The Jehovah's Witnesses laugh at us because they say they have your support because we are ILLITERATE AND POOR and because they are supported by a very powerful American organization. These factors permit them to agitate our people and divide the town."[533] Tiburcio Espina included the transcript from an open assembly where his municipal co-authorities asked community members if they should disown tradition to accommodate the *testigos'* needs. "At that point the assembly energetically shouted that you could not erase traditions just because a few people dedicate themselves to dividing the community

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[531] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Sino ellos lo tienen and lo toman como una trampolín para no prestar ningún servicio."

[532] Ibid.

[533] Tiburcio Espina to Vásquez Colmenares, February 28, 1982, AGEPEO. Original Spanish: "Y los Religiosos 'Testigos de Jehová' se burlan de nosotros porque nosotros somos ANALFABETOS Y POBRES, porque ellos cuentan con una organización bastante poderoso como son los EXTRANJEROS DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS DE NORTE AMERICA adonde ellos tienen sus Superiores de la organización mucho muy rico para estar agitando a nuestra gente y dividiendo el pueblo."

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for personal profit."[534] Finally, he claimed that the Witnesses were "bringing a series of lies and falsities [to the Department of Religious Affairs], even forging the signatures of his accomplices in the Jehovah's Witness religion."[535]

Witnesses Conrado Espina and Victor Vásquez Barceló's letters of complaint suggest that they would not support activities that benefitted the Catholic Church since it was of no use to them. From the municipal mayor's point of view, this stance was equivalent to rejecting the collective identity of the community; they had practiced syncretic-Catholicism for five centuries, who were the Jehovah's Witnesses to break this tradition? The Church in the center of town was the core of community identity; its sacredness stretched beyond the physical space and into the symbolic rituals and movements it represented.[536] The Witnesses were attempting to create their own sacred space and sense of community, which in turn impacted new social organization and identity in San Juan Juquila.

The Oaxacan state government issued several letters to the community advising that they compromise with the Jehovah's Witnesses. In March of 1982, the Department sent a government mediator from the DAR to San Juan to investigate. Investigator Saúl Jiménez Crispin wrote that it was obvious that the municipal officials refused to acknowledge that what they were doing violated religious freedom in Mexico. Instead, Jiménez Crispin complained that the mayor called a public assembly, despite DAR's

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[534] Saúl Jiménez Crispin to Justiniano Carballido González, Attorney General, Oaxaca, February 15, 1982. Dependencia: Asuntos Agrarios, Expediente: San Juan Juquila Mixes, Yautepec, Oaxaca, AGEPEO.

[535] Tiburcio Espina and PRI Committee, San Juan Juquila, Mixes, to Governor Vásquez Colmenares. February 4, 1982, AGEPEO.

[536] Sociologist Olga Montes García notes in her study on religious conflicts in Oaxaca that patron saint day fiestas aren't just about celebrating a Catholic saint but really a celebration of the community

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recommendation that they choose three representatives from each religion to privately negotiate their differences instead of in a large forum. Jiménez Crispin reported that the asamblea meeting dragged on in the burning sun for over two hours, all in Mixe, which Jiménez Crispin could not understand. The 800 Catholics at the asamblea held large banners that stated "Religion is free—Catholic, Apostolic and Roman," while the 60 Jehovah's Witnesses held one declaring: "Religion is free—Jehovah's Witnesses." Jiménez Crispin further reported that a dozen Catholic women in San Juan Juquila rushed towards the Jehovah's Witnesses trying to hit them and knock down their sign.[537]

Jiménez Crispin described how a negotiation following the public asamblea with three Jehovah's Witnesses and three Catholics initially resulted in a compromise: both parties would respect the religious beliefs of the other. But, it was short lived. "While the announcement was being made, individuals from the Catholic group began to hurl insulting words toward myself and the Oaxacan state government; one could hear such hurtful phrases as these: 'Con dinero baila el perro' [Money makes the world go around] and 'Aquí mande el pueblo' [Here the people rule]."[538] Jiménez Crispin tried to teach town members about the Mexican Constitution and let them know that what they were debating was anachronistic; Article 24 of the Constitution already ensured religious freedom, so their protests over the Jehovah's Witness presence held no credibility. However, the conflict was not about belief, but rather the fulfillment of town duties.

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itself; it is a time to renew and reaffirm customs and traditions. Montes García, "Las dinámicas de los conflictos religiosos en Oaxaca, 1975-1992," *Sociología* 14:41 (Septiembre-diciembre, 1999): 163.

[537] Saúl Jiménez Crispin to Justiniano Carballido González, Attorney General, Oaxaca, February 15, 1982, Dependencia: Asuntos Agrarios, Expediente: San Juan Juquila Mixes, Yautepec, Oaxaca. AGEPEO.

[538] Jiménez Crispin to Carballido González, Attorney General, Oaxaca, February 15, 1982, Dependencia: Asuntos Agrarios, Expediente: San Juan Juquila Mixes, Yautepec, Oaxaca. AGEPEO.

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Jiménez Crispin reported that a bilingual teacher, Professor Zamora, acted as an intermediary between Jiménez Crispin and Mayor Tiburcio Espina, who the DAR investigator noted either did not understand Spanish or was "feigning ignorance" when he met with him.[539] The professor did not acknowledge Jiménez Crispin's presence and dominated the asamblea, arguing that, "Jehovah's Witnesses poisoned the youth of the town, they brought exotic ideas, and they were against local customs."[540] The asamblea broke out in applause when Zamora concluded that the only way to resolve the situation was for the Witnesses to leave either "por las buenas o por las malas" [either voluntarily or by force].[541] Professor Zamora took over the meeting and the Catholics applauded him each time he asked that the Government confiscate the properties of these "dangerous people," before the people in the town took action themselves.[542]

At the close of the meeting, Jiménez Crispin asked Jehovah's Witnesses Victor Vásquez Barceló and Conrado Espina to provide the Jehovah's Witnesses point of view. Vásquez Barceló argued that the Witnesses were not "poisoning the youth in the town" but rather helping them become literate.[543] He showed copies of the secular literacy materials his congregation donated to local families and he also provided receipts for contributions Witnesses had made for capital developments. While they did not give money toward activities for the Catholic Church or fiestas, they did give money towards

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[539] Ibid.

[540] Ibid.

[541] Ibid.

[542] Ibid.

[543] Jiménez Crispin to Carballido González, Oaxaca, February 15, 1982, Dependencia: Asuntos Agrarios, Expediente: San Juan Juquila Mixes, Yautepec, Oaxaca. AGEPEO. Original Spanish: "El Señor Victor Vásquez Barceló, tomó la palabra que no es cierto que están envenenando a la juventud de ese lugar, sino todo lo contrario, y mostró al grupo de los católicos el suscrito de una carilla y impresa que dice: 'APRENDA A LEER Y ESCRIBIR.'"

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other types of community projects. Vásquez Barceló's statement went ignored since "the Catholics were too fanatical and did not listen to reason, all they did was insult the members of the Jehovah's Witnesses."[544] Later, Conrado Espina affirmed that the Jehovah's Witnesses were consistently eager to collaborate in everything that was beneficial for the town as a whole, but they would not give any money when the collection was for painting the Catholic Church or other liturgical expenses.

Jiménez Crispin complained that the teacher and the mayor spoke in Mixe the whole time and refused to sign the agreement. However, Jiménez Crispin noted, the mayor was well able to convey the following ultimatum in Spanish: "Tell your government that here the people rule and if you don't get rid of these Jehovah's Witnesses we are going to close the Municipal office and the state government can do whatever it pleases."[545] The Mixe men's use of their native language served to perhaps confuse or undermine state authorities. A frustrated Jiménez Crispin concluded that despite having spent an entire day with the community, no solution was reached, mostly, Jiménez Crispin argued, due to Professor Zamora's manipulation of the community by "taking advantage of the ignorance and the fanaticism of this poor town of San Juan Juquila Mixes, Yautepec, Oaxaca."[546]

In response, the state judicial attorney ordered the municipal authorities to come to the state capitol building in Oaxaca City for a mediation session set for April 5, 1982.

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[544] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Pero los católicos estaban demasiado exaltados y no escuchaban razones, sino que insultaban a los Miembros del otro grupo…"

[545] Ibid. Original Spanish: "'Dígale a su Gobierno aquí manda el pueblo y si no corren a esos individuos, Los Testigos de Jehová, vamos a cerrar el Municipio y que el Gobierno haga lo que quiera.'"

[546] Jiménez Crispin to Carballido González, Oaxaca, February 15, 1982, Dependencia: Asuntos Agrarios, Expediente: San Juan Juquila Mixes, Yautepec, Oaxaca. AGEPEO. Original Spanish: "Siendo a las 16 horas, y sin haber llegado a ninguna conclusión, por falta de colaboración y tacto del Profesor

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The Jehovah's Witnesses attended, but the mayor and his co-authorities claimed that they received the notice too late. The conflict continued throughout the 1980s before subsiding in the late 1990s when more community members converted to the Jehovah Witness denomination and other non-Catholic congregations competed for recognition. As of 2010, San Juan Juquila had a population of roughly 1,100, of which 10% were Jehovah's Witnesses.[547] Overall, the town is now 15% non-Catholic.[548]

Some of the familiar arguments against non-Catholics include: outsiders control them, they destroy local traditions, and they do not respect local authority. However, the town officials' criticism of the Witnesses was not completely true. They did contribute to community tequio and gave monetary contributions to town authorities for secular events. In the documents, it is not apparent that there were North American Jehovah's Witnesses controlling them. The Witnesses either converted after spending time in Oaxaca City working or attending school outside of the village or they were returning migrants. From the documents, it is apparent that local community men were the *Salón del Reino* (Kingdom Hall) leaders, not North Americans. The threat of outsiders invading the community was a common formula to use.

It is also evident from the documentary record that the Jehovah's Witnesses were respectful of tequio obligations but did not comply when local authorities' mixed Catholicism with civil obligations. Perhaps what made interactions with the Jehovah's

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Zamora, quien en todo momento se portó altivo aprovechando la ignorancia y el fanatismo de este pobre pueblo de San Juan Juquila Mixes, Yautepec, Oaxaca."

[547] Plan Municipal del Desarrollo, San Juan Juquila, Mixes, 2010.

[548] http://www.e-local.gob.mx/work/templates/enciclo/oaxaca/municipios/20216a.htm, accessed June 1, 2012.

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Witness faith dramatically different than dealing with mainline Protestants is that the Jehovah's Witness religion is designed to remove members from the constraints of secular society and focus them in preparation for the apocalypse, which is why witnessing to new members is such an essential component of the Jehovah's Witness faith. For example, members distribute the well-known *Despertad!* (Awake!) or *Atalaya* (Watchtower) bulletin warning people of the rapidly approaching doomsday.

Jehovah's Witness conversion also impacts local political leadership differently. Whereas in other communities such as Tlacochahuaya in the Central Valleys, Baptists took on active political roles in the community including the position of mayor, Jehovah's Witnesses limit their political participation, preferring to remove themselves from the secular realm. For example, as in the United States, Mexican Jehovah's Witnesses do not salute the political flag, enroll in the military, or sing the national anthem, as they believe that their only true allegiance is to God.

The Oaxacan state government supported the rights of the Jehovah's Witnesses to abstain from tequio and attempted to conduct a series of mediation sessions with DAR representatives. The Jehovah's Witnesses in San Juan Juquila respected their obligations to contribute to projects that benefitted the whole town. To that end, they did procure receipts for monetary donations and purchases they had made for the town. In their version of the conflict, they were actually strengthening education and capital development in San Juan Juquila. These converts challenged social organization and communal adhesion by refraining from certain tequio projects. Yet while conversion to a "secta" may have been the visible conflict, the underlying issue in San Juan Juquila was about local power dynamics and the strength of customary law.

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San Juan Tabaá, Villa Alta, Sierra Norte

While Pentecostalism in Latin America was essentially an offshoot of twentieth century North American missionary movements, its practice in Latin America by marginalized groups such as indigenous peoples, urban poor, and women represents Latin America's "first popular manifestation of Protestantism."[549] It is difficult to pinpoint when Pentecostalism first arrived in Mexico. Pentecostalism spread to Hispanics living in the United States not long after its birth in Los Angeles, California in 1906 at the Azusa Street Revival.[550] The first Pentecostal congregations registered in Mexico included *Iglesia Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús, Iglesia Cristiana Espiritual, Iglesia del Evangelio Completo* and *Asamblea de Dios*. Pentecostalism is best defined as a strain of evangelical Protestantism that enthusiastically calls for a direct relationship with the Holy Spirit through *glosalia,* or speaking in tongues, as experienced by the apostles on Pentecost Sunday.[551] Pentecostalism also entails faith healing and prophesies. However, the key difference between Pentecostalism and mainstream Protestant churches is that, while it can represent a particular denomination, Assemblies of God being the most

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[549] David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1993), 53.

[550] Officially, Pentecostalism started in 1901 in Topeka, Kansas. But in terms of popularizing the religion and attracting significant followers, many scholars credit the African American preacher William Seymour as its more important disseminator. Seymour led a series of revivals in downtown Los Angeles in 1906. See Cecil Robeck, *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2006), for background on Seymour and his connection to Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles. See Douglas Petersen, "The Azusa Street Mission and Latin American Pentecostalism," in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30:2 (April 2006): 66-67. See also Gastón Espinosa, "'God Made a Miracle in my Life': Latino Pentecostal Healing in the Borderlands," in Linda L. Barnes and Susan S. Sered, eds., *Religion and Healing in America* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 123-138. Finally, see Espinosa, "Brown Moses: Francisco Olazabal and Mexican American Pentecostal Healing in the Borderlands," in Espinosa and Mario T. García, eds., *Mexican American Religions: Spirituality, Activism, and Culture* (Durham: Duke University press, 2008), 263-295, for background to Latino involvement in the Azusa Street Revival.

[551] See Luke, *Book of Acts of the Apostles,* 2:1-13, "The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost."

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visible one, Pentecostalism is best understood as "an umbrella term used to describe evangelical Protestants sharing certain theological and organizational features."[552]

San Juan Tabaá Pentecostals believe the first Protestant in their town was a former *bracero* worker. Nicolás Ortiz Marcos, once a devout Catholic leader in the community, converted in the United States and returned to his community to conduct Bible study classes in his home.[553] Like San Juan Juquila, Mixes, the Zapotec community of San Juan Tabaá in the district of Villa Alta, Sierra Norte, also hosted a SIL missionary beginning in 1947, and early evangélicos formed a Bible study group with them in 1950.[554] In 1970, they built their own Pentecostal Church, *Esmirna,* named for the Biblical city in modern-day Turkey. The church was part of the Movimiento de Iglesias Evangélicas Pentecostales Independientes (MIEPI), currently one of the fastest growing Pentecostal churches in southern Mexico. Mexican Valente Aponte González founded MIEPI in 1930 in Mexico City. As of 2002, MIEPI had 751 centers in 27 Mexican states, primarily along the border and in southern Mexico.[555]

In June 1983, San Juan Tabaá Pentecostals sent complaints to the DAR in Mexico City. In their letters to Oaxacan governor Pedro Vásquez Colmenares, the Pentecostals complained about Catholics forcing them to help renovate the Catholic Church in Tabaá.

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[552] Anthony Gill, *Rendering unto Caesar: The Catholic Church and the State in Latin America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 83.

[553] Gerardo Menoza García, interview with author, Oaxaca City, Oaxaca, December 1, 2009. Original Spanish: "Bueno el hermano, pero antes, el hermano fue a trabajar a Estados Unidos, de bracero, fue a Estados Unidos, este, él era ora sí que cuando estaba dentro, era muy católico, era el que alquilaba el cura cuando no estaba él y se fue de bracero allá a Estados Unidos a trabajar en no sé en qué tiempo regresó, si al año, a los dos años, no sé. Regresó y ya empezó ahí a invitar a sus familiares cercanos y allá en la casa, empezó a leer la Biblia poco a poco y así se inició esto."

[554] Gerardo Menoza García, interview with author, Oaxaca City, Oaxaca, December 1, 2009.

[555] Alberto Hernández Hernández, "El cambio religiosos en México: crecimiento y auge del pentecostalismo," in Carolina Rivera Farfán and Elizabeth Juárez Cerdi eds., *Más Allá del Espíritu:*

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The municipal authorities threatened the thirty-eight Pentecostal families living in Tabaá with expulsion, prohibition from using the communal corn grinder, and lynching if they did not contribute to the project while using the familiar argument that their town had always practiced collective rituals.[556] Additionally, since San Juan Tabaá was allegedly the oldest village in the entire Sierra Norte region of Oaxaca, the municipal authorities felt strongly about the renovation project.[557] The Church had to be maintained and respected; it was the heart of the community.

Municipal president Juan B. Castellanos Morales stated that, through collective work, their ancestors had persevered against hardships for centuries, an example Tabaeños wanted to emulate, not renounce. Castellanos Morales had a long list of complaints about the Pentecostals: "The worst part is that they destroy our youth by teaching them to ridicule our Indigenous culture and encouraging this new generation to rebel against authorities."[558] Finally, he asserted that the Pentecostal pastors were brainwashing their followers through hypnotism and the promise of miracles "and that's how they achieved the blind confidence in this religion."[559] By describing the alleged use of 'magic' during their services, Castellanos Morales was most likely reacting to the

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Actores, Acciones y Prácticas en Iglesias Pentecostales (Zamora, Michoacán: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2007), 69.

[556] Alejandro Sobarzo Loaiza to Pedro Vásquez Colmenares, August 2, 1983.AGEPO, Expediente 2/347/15704.

[557] See Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-Between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), for background to Catholicism and political rule in native communities of the Sierra Norte.

[558] Mayor Juan B. Castellanos Morales to Governor Pedro Vásquez Colmenares, March 8, 1983, AGEPEO, Folder 41. San Juan Tabaá, Villa Alta. Original Spanish: "Lo doloroso es que estos Señores arrasen a nuestra juventud, desprecian de así nuestra cultura Indígena, obligando a la nueva generación a revelarse contra de las Autoridades."

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exuberant style of Pentecostal worship that celebrated the Holy Spirit. It is also not a complete stretch to suggest that the municipal mayor might have been purposely confusing the Pentecostals with deadly cults such as the Jim Jones' Peoples Temple in Guyana to insinuate that his *paisanos* were at risk of being manipulated by their church leaders in dangerous ways.

Castellanos Morales demanded that the state governor's office intervene and punish the "negligent" villagers who confused religion with public obligations such as cargo and tequio. The municipal president's complaint attests to how boundaries between public and private, civic and religious were blurred in indigenous communities. Catholicism was such an integral part of community life that breaking from it meant also breaking from the community ethos. The municipal president himself did not realize how blurred the boundaries between civil and religious obligations were when he accused the evangélicos of not honoring their public duties. The evangélicos were opting not to participate in tequio, but they were doing so because they rejected giving funds or labor toward the renovation of the Catholic Church. In contrast, the municipal president saw the renovation of the Catholic Church not as a religious duty but as a community obligation to support the preservation of an ancient Dominican church. Castellanos Morales concluded that, unless the dissenters started contributing towards the church renovation, they would be expelled from the community.

To a certain extent, Castellanos Morales was correct; the Church of San Juan Tabaá was *patrimonio nacional,* and his municipal government was charged with keeping

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[559] Ibid. Original Spanish: "A través de diversas acciones Mágicas los Misioneros conocidos como 'Pastores' manejaban el termino de milagros, hicieron ver visiones a nuestros Paisanos por medio del hipnotismo, y así lograron la confianza ciega a esta Religión."

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it up to date despite the fact that it received insufficient funds from the state government. Castellanos alluded to rising inflation in Mexico when he stated: "taking into account the crisis we are experiencing due to the high cost of living, we decided to organize the project 50% by tequio, the only means possible..."[560] In other words, Castellanos Morales's government could not afford to bring in professional laborers to do the whole church renovation; much of it would have to be done by organized volunteer groups in the community.

For their part, the evangélicos, as with the Jehovah's Witnesses in San Juan Juquila, provided evidence of their contributions to the construction of a *telesecundaria* (satellite high school) in 1981. Furthermore, the evangelicals mentioned that other hermanos evangélicos who had migrated to Oaxaca City or other regions of Mexico still paid fees toward tequio and sent tax money in to help subsidize the corn mill and other development projects in the community even though they were not benefiting from them daily. Pentecostal leader Pablo Fabián Mendoza also mentioned that it was the evangélicos who had led the collection for money to bring electricity to the town thus demonstrating their commitment to progress.[561] Fabián Mendoza further brought up the absurdity of the renovation project by noting that its projected cost totaled over three million pesos, a staggering sum considering the poverty in the region. The municipal authorities required local residents to pay $1,000 pesos each and migrants living in

[560] Juan B. Castellanos Morales, et.al., "Decree by the community of San Juan Tabaá," March 7, 1983, AGEPEO. Original Spanish quote: "Tomando en cuenta de la crisis en que estamos atravesando por el alto costo de la vida, decidimos emprender la Obra mediante *tequio*, que el único medio posible y tomando en cuenta esta forma colectiva de trabajo, ya que es una herencia que nos dejaron nuestros antecesores y que la hemos preservado hoy en día."

[561] Pablo Fabián Mendoza to Governor Pedro Vásquez Colmenares, March 9, 1983, AGEPEO.

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Mexico City up to 10,000 pesos for the renovation. The Pentecostal elders described it as bleeding the community members dry.[562]

On March 6, 1983, the town gathered at an asamblea to discuss the tequio project. At this point, the Pentecostals rejected the proposed project despite severe pressure from their Catholic neighbors. Fabián Mendoza said that some San Juan Tabaá members got close to them and threatened to lynch the Pentecostal hermanos if they did not contribute to the collective project. The community as a whole voted to restrict the Pentecostals from grinding corn at the nixtamal, accessing irrigation water for their crops, and accessing electricity; to revoke their rights to *ejidal* lands, non-recognition in the Civil Registry; and to threaten to strip them of membership to the *tienda campesina* (communal goods store) if they continued to oppose the needs of the town. Fabián Mendoza also mentioned that the town authorities had advised the telesecundaria to ban evangelical children from attending, but the school principal did not comply. [563]

On March 22, 1983, the municipal authorities wrote a letter to President Miguel de la Madrid asserting that the conflict in San Juan Tabaá was not a case of religious intolerance by Catholics. Municipal authorities respected religious freedom and were only concerned with preserving the sixteenth century Dominican church in their community; it held colonial paintings that were part of their cultural heritage. They mentioned that, due to the 1983 economic crisis in Mexico, they knew that the project

[562] As Mountz and Wright demonstrate in "Daily Life in a Transnational Migrant Community," and Gross depicts in "Farewell to Fiestas and Saints?" migrants are taxed at higher rates, are expected to make larger contributions to their home communities, and are often assigned the most prestigious and expensive *cargo* positions upon return to the community.

[563] Pablo Fabián Mendoza to Governor Pedro Vásquez Colmenares, March 9, 1983, AGEPEO.

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would not get much federal or state funding.[564] Therefore, the municipal authorities made up the difference by asking each family in the community to donate money and physical labor toward fixing the roof. The mayor claimed that fifty Pentecostal families refused to contribute. Without the Pentecostal money or labor, finishing up the $3,500,000 peso renovation project would be difficult.

Furthermore, similar to San Juan Juquila, the Tabaá mayor labeled the Pentecostals a "toxic" presence in the town. Mayor Castellanos Morales praised De la Madrid's willingness to listen to the needs of indigenous groups and commended his strong words against the continued presence of the SIL in Oaxaca during his March 1983 visit.[565] The letter accused Pentecostals not just in their community but also throughout the Zapotec Sierra of encouraging their followers to rebel against the villages' customs in order to get out of doing tequio. The Catholics in San Juan Tabaá hinted that some remaining SIL missionaries in the Zapotec Region also criticized tequio in Oaxaca and perhaps were responsible for the contempt of Pentecostals in the region toward performing tequio.[566]

The Tabaá case played out over a series of petitions back and forth between the municipal mayor's office, the Oaxacan Religious Affairs Department, the Pentecostals in

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[564] Juan B. Castellanos Morales to President Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado, March 22, 1983. May 26, 1983, AGEPEO, 143.1/Dirección Jurídica del Gobierno.

[565] Juan B. Castellanos Morales to President Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado, March 22, 1983, AGEPEO, 143.1/Dirección Jurídica del Gobierno.

[566] Castellanos Morales to President De la Madrid Hurtado, March 22, 1983, AGEPEO, 143.1/Dirección Jurídica del Gobierno. Original Spanish: "Esta secta ha provocada el levamiento de sus seguidores contra las costumbres de los pueblos donde operan, los obligan a revelarse contra las autoridades para prestar su servicio de contribución en las actividades colectivas que hemos mencionado como TEQUIO, estos grupos protestantes siguen operando en contra de las autoridades federales y estatales que al margen de las estrictamente religiosas vienen desarrollando, entre los que se encuentran estadounidenses que trabajan como el Instituto Lingüístico del Verano que continúan operando en nuestro estado a pesar de haber sido cancelado por la Secretaría de Educación Pública."

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San Juan Tabaá and Mexico City, and the Religious Affairs main office in Mexico City. On May 23, 1983, Mayor Castellanos Morales sent a bilateral compromise signed by the Catholics in the town and a dozen evangelical families stating they would contribute to future tequios, including ones related to the Catholic Church. Noticeably, the document declared that Pentecostals outside of San Juan Tabaá held no right to appeal *tequio* matters. Of course, the same would not be true for migrants living in the US who were Catholic. Catholic migrants did not serve in *tequios* while they were away. They still contributed in other ways and maintained communication by telephone, letters, and through familial intermediaries with the municipal government.

One Tabaeño migrant, Gerardo Mendoza García, particularly rejected the municipal authorities' treatment of the Pentecostals. Exposed to evangelical Protestant teachings while growing up in San Juan Tabaá, Mendoza García formally converted to Pentecostalism in 1978 while working in Mexico City. Even though Mendoza García lived most of the year in Mexico City, he still had a plot of land where he grew coffee and he depended on it for extra income. He also identified with San Juan Tabaá, not Mexico City, as his true home. Mendoza García, twenty-six years old in 1983 and living in Mexico City, described the prevalent Pentecostal opinion regarding the Catholic Church's renovation project: "We did not ask for their help when we built ours, so why did we have to help with theirs?"[567] Mendoza García explained: "Because I came frequently from Mexico City to visit the evangelical church and the pastor, the town mayor blamed me as the principal agitator, that I was the reason for all of the problems,

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that I was telling the evangelicals not to collaborate, that I was the problem. So, they grabbed me and locked me up like a criminal."[568] Mendoza García's role in the conflict suggests that while he had migrated to Mexico City for work, he remained committed to the Pentecostal congregation in his community. For the municipal leaders in the community, Mendoza García was an outsider and his influence over other evangelicals in the community was a threat. His example also supports my contention that once evangelicals left their home communities and learned "constitutional" law, they came back to support the interests of evangelicals in their native communities. They also identified with other Pentecostals in new locations. When Mendoza García heard of the conflict in his community, he "automatically supported his hermanos" despite living in Mexico City.[569] He attended mandatory mediation sessions in the Oaxaca City governor's office along with the San Juan Tabaá evangelical leaders and the municipal authorities. He also brought Mexico City Pentecostal advocates with him for support. "And so that's when they started to say that they were the ones who ruled in the town, that it did not matter what they said in Oaxaca City or Mexico City… No, they said, this time we are going to be the ones who make the law. We are the law… We want you to support us with repairing the Catholic Church. Whether you want to or you don't want to, it doesn't

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[567] Gerardo Mendoza García, interview with author, Oaxaca City, Oaxaca, December 1, 2009. Original Spanish: "Nosotros también cuando lo hicimos, lo hicimos, no les pedimos ayuda ¿no?"

[568] Mendoza García, interview with author, Oaxaca City, Oaxaca, December 1, 2009. Original Spanish: "Pero nosotros estábamos en México y sabíamos todo lo que sucedía y a veces nos íbamos hasta el pueblo para saber con más detalle el problema ¿no? que nos contara el Pastor de allá, que nos contara, como estaban las cosas y claro de hecho, entonces me detuvieron a mí como principal ¿no? del problema, que yo era del problema, que yo era que los estaba incitando a que no hicieran, no colaboraran ¿no? de ahí ya me tuvieron a mí como hombre malo ¿no?"

[569] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Entonces automáticamente yo ya estaba con los hermanos evangélicos, ya los apoyaba."

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matter."[570] In this example, the supremacy of local authority over individuals' choices is readily apparent.

Aware of the volatile situation in San Juan Tabaá, the *Comité Nacional Evangélico de Defensa* wrote a letter of complaint to Governor Pedro Vásquez Colmenares. Evangelical Defense Committee President Ramón Urirre complained that he had helped the Oaxacan state government negotiate an agreement in April between the Catholic municipal authorities and the Evangelical families that both groups would support each other in tequios, meaning that the Catholics might occasionally have to help in a tequio for the Pentecostal church. The agreement was never implemented and evangelical homes and crops continued to be damaged as Catholics threw stones at their windows and denied them access to irrigation water.[571] At least ten of the thirty-eight evangelical families left San Juan Tabaá, afraid of being shot at since everyone was armed.[572] The Pentecostal leaders earlier had suggested that the army come in and persuade the town members to hand in their arms. Evangelical president Ramon Uribe complained that the state police came in to check out the damaged homes but did nothing about the violence.[573]

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[570] Mendoza García, interview with author, Oaxaca City, Oaxaca, December 1, 2009. Original Spanish:"Y cuando teníamos que vernos digamos aquí en Oaxaca, venían la autoridad y venían los *hermanos* de allá de mi pueblo y también venían dos, tres personas de México acá, para apoyar y así empezó, de tal manera que ellos eh, lograron lo que quisieron allá en el pueblo y dijeron: "No, ahora vamos a hacer nosotros la ley", "Nosotros somos la ley" "Nosotros vamos a hacer la ley y nosotros lo que queramos eso vamos a hacer. Queremos que ustedes nos apoyen con una iglesia católica, quieran o no quieran, se hará por la fuerza pero lo van a hacer y dijeron no, no y no, pues no queremos, dijeron a los hermanos de allá."

[571] Ramón Urirre to Governor Pedro Vásquez Colmenares, May 26, 1983, AGEPEO, 143.1/Dirección Jurídica del Gobierno.

[572] Pablo Fabián Mendoza to Governor Pedro Vásquez Colmenares 29 April 1983, AGEPEO, 143.1/Dirección Jurídica del Gobierno.

[573] Ramón Urirre to Governor Pedro Vásquez Colmenares, May 26, 1983, AGEPEO, 143.1/Dirección Jurídica del Gobierno.

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Mendoza García used legal channels in Mexico City to protest evangélico persecution in Oaxaca. He brought his case all the way to the national DAR office in Mexico City. On September 8, 1983, Mexico City official Maria Emilia Farias Mackey wrote a memo to Governor Pedro Vásquez Colmenares of Oaxaca stating that the mayor of San Juan Tabaá illegally charged Mendoza García and other evangelicals with a fine of 8,000 pesos when they chose not to participate in the church renovation tequio. After this, the Oaxacan Attorney General's office entered the conflict by writing a memo on October 3, 1983 asking Oaxacan investigators to monitor the town. Mendoza García's case continued to attract the attention of the Oaxacan state government throughout 1984.

On February 5, 1984, the new San Juan Tabaá mayor Serafín Bautista Cruz called a general assembly to discuss the fate of Mendoza García. Mendoza García was charged with committing crimes "against the social norms at the heart of the community."[574] His family advised him not to dispute the charges. "They said let them take everything, you will still have God."[575] Mendoza García then recalled the night Catholic townspeople tried to lynch him:

> My brother-in-laws and other hermanos grabbed me and told me to run, that people were coming for me. We ran to the coffee plantation. The air was practically pushing me forward as I ran. We kept running and weaving between the coffee plants. We found a bench and pushed it against the fence, and I jumped over. They were now fifty people following us calling my name, looking for me, but I had left the plantation. I ran and ran. I crossed a small creek on a board, slipping the whole time until I found a path on the other side. There was a family friend that lived off the path a little bit. They hid me in their outhouse. From there I could hear people calling out, looking for me. I stayed in there for I don't know, maybe two hours. By then, the people were gone. Then I walked back home a different way, entering the town through the back, maybe at 1:30 in the morning,

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[574] Serafín Bautista Cruz, et al., *Acta de San Juan Tabaá,* February 5, 1984, AGEPEO, 143.1/Dirección Jurídica del Gobierno.

[575] Gerardo Mendoza García, interview with author, Oaxaca City, Oaxaca, December 1, 2009. Original Spanish: "Y decía mi familia, deja las cosas dice, Dios no nos va a dejar ¿no?"

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> but I'm not sure. My family and lots of hermanos from the church were at the house crying, thinking I had died. They thanked God that nothing had happened to me, nothing. And that's what happened. So, after that, we went to bed, calm and everything. They called me to the municipal hall again the next day, but it was different. It was light out so I knew people weren't going to try to grab me. The municipal authorities told me they were going to guard the roads that night so that townspeople wouldn't come after me again. But I think they were really watching the roads so that I wouldn't escape town, right? I didn't do anything and I slept fine after that. I slept peacefully because you know the saying, 'if you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear.'"[576]
>
> But the following day, the municipal authorities called together another asamblea.

Mendoza García described it as a meeting of just Catholic men, mostly the friends and family of the municipal mayor, not the whole community. A dozen Evangelical hermanos were sentenced to two nights in the local jail for not contributing toward the church fees. Mendoza García was officially expelled. As a *persona foránea* or stranger he was no longer eligible to serve municipal positions or obligated to contribute to community services such as tequio; he was no longer recognized as a native Tabaeño. Mendoza García described his reaction when he was officially expelled:

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[576] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Me agarraron así y dice, vámonos, era, eran familiares, eran mis cuñados y eran otros hermanos. Me agarraron de la mano dice, vámonos porque ahorita vienen por ti eh, ¿qué será? como 30 metros en el patio del municipio había cafetal y me llevaron, casi al aire me llevaron, vámonos rápido porque vienen por ti, me llevaron al cafetal, antes de cómo de aquí a donde está la silla así yo me volteé, venían como 50 personas corriendo diciendo por donde está, por donde se metió, no, nomás llegaron a la orilla del cafetal y me hicieron así, me aventaron pues. Sí, sí y ya ellos ahí se quedaron, yo agarré, me fui entre los cafetales, pero como van los más o menos conocía por donde podía salir, lo que hice fue así y llegué a un bordo, a un bordo que estaba como a 15 metros, me fui entre los cafetales así y llegué a un bordo así, me senté, me resbalé y llegué hasta un camino que estaba abajo, llegué hasta el camino y como atravesando nomás el camino vamos, vive un familiar. Yo agarré, me atravesé y que me meto en el baño, ahí estaba yo escondidito en el baño y oía yo los gritos de las personas allá arriba. Pues me estaban buscando y no, no me encontraron. Yo digo, si me quedo por ahí, me escondo por ahí, me encuentran, ahí me hubieran matado, pero no. Y pasó, este, pasó. Ya este me escondí allí y ya yo después al ratito ya corrían, toda la gente venía y subían el camino ya, una de tantas agarré más tarde, bajé entre los cafetales, di la vuelta hasta abajo del pueblo, llegar, rodear para llegar hasta la casa donde estaba la familia. Tons [Entonces] llegué como a las dos horas, llegué hora y media, no sé qué tiempo y este, había muchos, muchos hermanos allí y mi familia ya estaba llorando ya estaba bloqueado, que ya me habían matado pues, y se admiraron que gracias a Dios no me pasó nada, no había nada. Y ya pasó y descansamos, tranquilo todo y este, y al día siguiente ya me llamó otra vez la autoridad, la junta otra vez, pero ya fue diferente, porque era de día ¿no? y según que esa noche la autoridad cuidó los caminos, digamos los caminos que podía yo escapar ¿no? que según cuidó él los caminos. Yo no hice nada, yo dormí tranquilo, yo dormí tranquilo y como dice el dicho que 'el que nada debe nada teme' ¿no?"

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> Well, maybe because the Lord gave me strength, when they told me they were writing up a document to have me expelled from the town, I answered them back. I said, 'You know what, why don't you write in that document that I'm expelled from not just the town, but from Oaxaca, and all of Mexico? You know, I want to go see new places, different places. So, then don't just ban me from the town, ban me from the whole Mexican Republic. Since you are trying to get rid of me, why should I have to go live in Oaxaca City? It doesn't make sense. Why don't you make it the whole country?'[577]

Mendoza García's challenge to Tabaá authorities suggests that he knew the local government ultimately did not have the constitutional right to ban him from San Juan Tabaá let alone Mexico.

On February 15, 1984, the Oaxacan attorney general's office sent a memo to Mendoza García and to the mayor José E. Bautista Fabián ordering them to attend mediation at the Governor's palace on May 5, 1984. Though he attended the required mediation meetings, what municipal authorities agreed to in Oaxaca City meant nothing in the community. Mendoza García said that even with all his legal and spiritual support from Mexico City and Oaxaca City, nothing changed. He recalled:

> I left my town [in 1984] and maybe came back four or five years later. I had nothing left there, no land, no house. They took the *ejidal* property and houses from all of my family who were evangelicals. I didn't try to get my house back, I let it go, and I stayed with my wife's family. No one said anything to me about not being allowed back in. But things are still the same. If an Evangelical man wants to marry a Catholic girl, the Evangelical has to pay 30,000 pesos to the municipal government since they know that the new couple won't contribute to most of the tequios that revolve around the Catholic Church. If the groom doesn't pay the fee, he'll lose his right to *ejidal* property. So, what happens in many cases

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[577] Mendoza García, interview with author, Oaxaca City, Oaxaca, December 1, 2009. Original Spanish: "Hicieron el escrito, hicieron el escrito este, y yo pues, yo, yo la verdad el Señor me dio fuerzas para cuando me dijeron, vamos a hacerle un escrito para que salga usted del pueblo. Yo les dije, 'pero yo les pido que me hagan un escrito, pero, para que me saquen del país, no del pueblo', yo les dije, 'que me saquen del país porque quiero ir a conocer otros lugares. Entonces que no sea a nivel pueblo, que sea a nivel de la República Mexicana. Porque qué caso tiene que me saquen del pueblo', digo, 'porque yo me voy a vivir a Oaxaca o por ahí, pues no tiene caso, hagan algo bueno siquiera hagan algo bueno y como sabían todos que no, no era posible, pues entons [entonces]."

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is that evangelicals go back to being Catholic when they want to marry, at least nominally. That's how San Juan Tabaá is trying to get rid of evangelicals.[578]

However, Mendoza García noted that the Protestants in the town keep growing in numbers. The monetary fines and social ostracism have only served to make the religion even more appealing to Tabaeños.[579] Mendoza García was officially expelled from the community, but the Tabaá Pentecostals could remain in the village as long as they promised not to recruit new members openly and paid fees in place of doing tequios that violated their religious convictions. Yet, as Mendoza García's testimony above suggests, the monetary fines often had the opposite outcome.[580]

The cases in San Juan Tabaá and San Juan Juquila both speak to the question of citizenship. In many usos y costumbres communities, indigenous peoples refer to themselves as ciudadanos (citizens) meaning members of the community with special obligations and privileges. Throughout the 1980s, whether migrants or non-Catholics could still be considered ciudadanos was a burning question in many usos y costumbres communities. Should Zapotec *busbois* in Los Angeles or Mixtec *pineros* in Oregon's Willamette Valley still contribute towards tequio? Were they still citizens? They were, after all, in a transnational space often organizing with paisanos from their native communities or regions of Oaxaca. Did community members who converted also have to

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[578] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Que después ya no sé a los cuatro años, cinco años volví a regresar y nadie me dijo nada. Qué claro ya no decir digamos esta es mi casa, ya no podía, ya no tenía, iba yo, pero con la casa de familiares de mi esposa, ahí llegaba yo allí, pero ya no, yo ya no tenía nada, entonces, ya el pueblo lo quitó, y como tengo dos hermanas, pues ya ellas viven en México pero ellas se van, ellas cooperan y todo y a ellas se les quedó una parte, tons [entonces] eso fue el motivo de mí y sí, sí es cierto ¿no?, hasta ahorita todavía sigue, siguen ellos, son tremendos los católicos porque ahorita, desde aquel entonces sacaron una ley ellos que, de que este, si un, si un joven se casa con un, si un evangélico, un joven evangélico se casa con una católica, tiene que pagar 30,000 pesos."

[579] Mendoza García, interview with author, Oaxaca City, Oaxaca, December 1, 2009.

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be responsible for tequio? What were the legal repercussions if they did not contribute?[581]

In both San Juan Tabaá and San Juan Juquila, converts were still expected to contribute toward collective work projects and monetary donations involving the Catholic Church. Endemic poverty and the worsening agricultural crisis spurred migration from Oaxaca throughout the 1980s. As a result, many indigenous communities were increasingly left with a shrunken pool of available citizens for tequio projects and cargo positions, the very core of a community's identity. Yet, absent evangélico villagers like Mendoza García could be more of a threat to community solidarity than absent Catholics who looked forward to coming home and participating in the fiestas.

While this section has been primarily concerned with local and state reactions to Pentecostal and Jehovah's Witness growth, it is also crucial to recognize that conflicts such as those discussed above in San Juan Juquila, Mixes, and San Juan Tabaá were not just limited to Catholic vs. *secta*. There were also plenty of cases of prolonged conflicts that involved 'traditional' Catholics against 'modern' Catholics. In the central valley Zapotec community of San Antonino Castillo, two different Catholic groups fought for control of the local parish.[582] At issue in San Antonino was deciding which of the competing factions could determine how local Catholicism was practiced. The majority of the community who wanted the mayordomos to continue collecting money for saints'

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[580] Ibid. See also http://blog.paulsofy.com/2007/11/un-frasco-de-alabastro-en-san-juan-taba.html for an evangelical blog's interpretation of religious violence in the Sierra Norte of Oaxaca.

[581] See Laura Nader, *Harmony Ideology: Justice and Control in a Zapotec Mountain Town* (Stanford University Press, 1991), for ethnography on customary law and social organization in a Zapotec community in the Sierra Norte.

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day fiestas supported one group, *Los Honorables* led by Father Elpidio Ramírez. On the other side, were *Los Cruzados* (Those of the Cross) who wanted to drastically change the way saints' days were celebrated.

"Los Cruzados" was a charismatic prayer group with seventeen branches throughout Oaxaca.[583] The group's leader in San Antonino, Father Marcelino, attracted a large following of teenagers in the community and brought in outside visitors. Marcelino and his young San Antonino supporters argued that the town was spending too much time and precious resources on the *fiesta* system and forgetting the true meaning of the sacraments.[584] Elders in the community sent a petition to the Secretary General's office complaining that Father Marcelino's supporters had little experience in organizing the local church and were trying to eradicate "*costumbres*" by criticizing the town's patron saint day fiesta.[585] They asked that the traditionalists and their priest have primary control of the church inventory and norms in the community.

This example suggests that some segments of the Oaxacan Catholic base did not approve of money spent by the religious *cofradías* (brotherhoods) that drove local Catholicism. It also points to changing social dynamics in the community. Young people had taken their elders to task for wasting money on the town's feast day celebration when they thought the money would be better spent in other areas. The community elders

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[582] Toribio Santiago Patéos, et al., to Juan Antonino Santiago, Mayor, San Antonillo. David Nicolás Vásquez Velasco, March 6, 1983 to Justiniano Carballido, Director Jurídico, Oaxaca. Dependencia: Asuntos Agrarias. Expediente: San Antonillo Velasco, June 17, 1983.

[583] Marroquín, *El Conflicto religioso,* 49.

[584] David Nicolás Vásquez Velasco to Justiniano Carballido, Director Jurídico, Oaxaca. Dependencia: Asuntos Agrarias. Expediente: San Antonino Velasco, June 20, 1983.

[585] Mayor Juan Antonino Santiago to Jesús Martínez, Secretario General del Despacho, Oaxaca, June 14, 1983, AGEPEO. Dependencia: Asuntos Agrarias. Expediente: San Antonino Velasco.

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argued that the youth had no right to question tradition. In this case, the traditionalists won. Archbishop Bartolomé Carrasco Briseño intervened to support Ramírez over Marcelino and so did the Oaxacan state authorities who mentioned in a report that Marcelino's group appeared to attract individuals of questionable morals, including homosexuals and *"mujeres de la vida galante"* (prostitutes).[586] Given the fierce opposition to the changes and new social dynamics this group represented, perhaps it is not surprising that many members of "Los Cruzados" throughout Oaxaca later were the first in their villages to convert to Pentecostalism.[587] Like the competition between traditional and modernist Catholics, competition from Pentecostal and alternative Christians was a deep concern for the institutional and grassroots Church in Oaxaca.

The Southern Pacific Regional Episcopacy

In January of 1979, newly inaugurated Pope John Paul II traveled to Mexico to preside over the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM). After delivering the opening remarks at the Bishops' meeting in neighboring Puebla, John Paul II visited the Oaxacan town of Cuilapan de Guerrero. On the steps of an abandoned sixteenth century Dominican monastery, John Paul II warmly embraced indigenous children and spoke of his commitment to improving the lives of Latin American indigenous peoples.[588] He reveled in Mexico's pre-Hispanic cultural traditions, even asking for an encore of the

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[586] Perfecto Mora Ravelo to Justiniano Carballido Gonzalez, June 17, 1983, AGEPEO, San Antonino Castillo, Dirección Jurídica. Original Spanish: "Por otra parte, las personas caracterizadas también hicieron mención de que el padre Marcelino a veces cuando va al pueblo lo hace en compañía de dos o tres homosexuales y en otras con dos o tres mujeres de la vida galante."

[587] Marroquín, *El Conflicto religioso,* 49.

[588] John Paul II, "La Causa de los Indígenas, Causa de Cristo y de la Iglesia," Remarks in Cuilapan, Oaxaca, January 29, 1979, *Tehuantepec 1891-1991: Un Siglo de Fe* (El Magisterio Pastoral de la Región Pacifico Sur, 1991).

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colorful *danza de la pluma* after his short speech in Spanish concluded.[589] *New York Times* reporter Alan Riding, however, noted that the monolingual, impoverished indigenous Oaxacans benefitted little from the extravagant welcoming ceremony that paid homage to Mexico's indigenous past but barely acknowledged its marginalized present.[590]

The Pope's visit to Oaxaca was an example of how the Catholic Church hierarchy was losing touch with its base. John Paul II assured the predominantly Mixtec and Zapotec audience that he stood with oppressed Christians throughout the world. Yet at CELAM, a crucial venue to set the Church's trajectory in Latin America, he railed against Catholic bishops for supporting liberation theology, the driving framework behind the 1968 CELAM meeting in Medellin, Colombia. John Paul II refused to separate the tenets of the doctrine from what he interpreted as unadulterated Marxism. At its core, liberation theology promulgated a "preferential option for the poor" in order to change the structural inequalities in poor and especially indigenous regions of Latin America.[591] Throughout the 1980s, the *Obispos de la Región Pacífico Sur* (Southern Pacific Regional Episcopacy) advocated for collective rights of indigenous peoples in

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[589] *La Danza de la pluma* (Feather Dance) is a reenactment of the Conquest of Mexico but with a different ending: Hernán Cortés and his *conquistadores* lose. See Jeffrey H. Cohen, "Danza de la pluma: Symbols of Submission and Separation in a Mexican Fiesta," in *Anthropological Quarterly* 66:3 (July 1993): 143-158.

[590] Alan Rider, "Pope Tells Mexico's Indians He'll Speak for the Oppressed," *New York Times,* January 30, 1979.

[591] For the foundational texts in liberation theology in Latin America, see Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1973) and Leonardo Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987). For an overview of liberation theology, see Phillip Berryman, *Liberation Theology* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), Christian Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology* (University of Chicago Press, 1991), Daniel H. Levine ed., *Religion and Political Conflict in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), and Paul E. Sigmund, *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). For an examination of CEBS in Oaxaca, see Valerie Ann MacNabb and Martha W. Rees, "Liberation or Theology? Ecclesial Base Communities in Oaxaca, Mexico," in *Journal of Church and State 25* (Fall, 1993): 723-749.

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Oaxaca and Chiapas, even as the national Mexican episcopacy and the Vatican clamped down on the progressive church in Latin America.[592] Of course, the institutional Church and the grassroots church in Oaxaca agreed on one critical area: Protestant growth was a threat to the vitality of the Church in what was arguably the most Catholic region of the world.[593] In Oaxaca throughout the 1980s, the southern episcopacy argued that *sectas* weakened indigenous communities at a time when they needed to use collective rights to unite against state violence. Under assault from modernization, migration and religious fragmentation, Oaxacan Catholics emphasized how leaving the Catholic Church was not just an act of religious dissension but also an attack against indigenous and communal identity.

The archdiocese of Oaxaca, headed by Archbishop Bartolomé Carrasco from 1976 until 1992, showed great concern for the rights of indigenous peoples. Throughout the 1970s and the 1980s, Catholic bishops in indigenous zones of Oaxaca spoke out publicly about the repression of indigenous Chiapanecos and Oaxaqueños. The Southern Pacific Regional Episcopacy consistently differed with the Mexican national episcopacy by promoting liberation theology. Horrified by the repression of Guatemalan Mayans during the neighboring country's thirty-six year civil war and seeing similar social, political, and economic inequalities in Oaxaca, the episcopacy sought to expose violations of indigenous rights in Oaxaca and Chiapas.[594] On December 15, 1978, Arturo Lona Reyes, Bishop of Tehuantepec, Oaxaca and President of the Episcopal Commission

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[592] Michael Novak, "The Case against Liberation Theology," *New York Times,* October 21, 1984.

[593] In 1979, over 300 million of the estimated 700 million Catholics in the world lived in Latin America. George Vecsey, "Trip is First Big Test of New Pope's Reign," *New York Times,* January 26, 1979, A5.

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for Indians, wrote a letter asking President López Portillo to condemn paramilitary violence in Oaxaca. The letter outlined a horrific case of violence against indigenous leaders in the Oaxacan community of Puxmetacan, Mixes, that was a microcosm for what happened throughout southern Mexico. Lona Reyes described the murder of eight indigenous Mixe leaders who were asking for the restoration of *ejidal* land that rightfully belonged to the community but was fraudulently controlled by a former state deputy. The former deputy had assistance from a private army and a small plane in his attack against the indigenous community that Lona Reyes believed belonged to the Mexican military. The Bishop contextualized the murder of the indigenous leaders in Puxmetacan, Mixes, into the larger picture of state violence in southern Mexico:

> The victims are always the same: Indians and the peasants who struggle for their rights…Mexico is following the road of violence, repressions, and massacres of innocent people—situations of violence that do not differ from the most repressive countries of Latin America… For this reason, in the name of the Gospel and the basic human rights of our indigenous and peasants peoples who are being crushed by violence, I urgently call on all Mexicans but especially on those who govern our country, that they satisfactorily clarify these acts, punish the culpable individuals, and devise necessary structural mechanisms to guarantee not only nonviolence against the weakest members of our society but justice and effective peace for all.[595]

The bishops also complained about the North American values with which Protestant *sectas* evangelized indigenous communities. The Bishops complained that *sectas,* such as Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, persuaded indigenous Mexicans that the ways of the North Americans "are better, more intelligent and stronger…. Because of the presence of these propagators, there have been deaths, burning of [saints'] images, and arson in our

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[594] "Growing Repression in Mexico," *CENCOS Bulletin,* (June 1977) as reprinted in *LADOC* (November/December 1977):19-22.

[595] Arturo Lona Reyes, "Violence Against the Indians in Oaxaca," *Estudios Indígenas* 3:4 (December, 1978): 32-34.

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chapels."[596] In the above quotation, the Southern Bishops draw a comparison between the US Religious Right's influences in Central America, especially Guatemala where President Ríos Montt enjoyed a close relationship with U.S. televangelists.

In 1984, the Southern Pacific Regional Episcopacy collectively warned about the rise of *sectas* in southern Mexico. The bishops complained that in some communities, *secta* members were already becoming municipal authorities.[597] The bishops were particularly concerned that Mexico could soon be following the same road to Protestantism as Guatemala.

> It is becoming increasingly alarming in this region that, parallel to the social explosion going on in Central America with Protestantism, Protestant sects are multiplying and springing up over there. The *sectas* say they need to lead Christians to God since, according to them, Catholic priests are preoccupied with mundane matters, not spiritual ones. This division, manipulation, and social weakening that these sects cause in the *Pueblo* is anti-patriotic and suggests what might also happen here when social tensions will boil over their limits. Is the problem moving to southern Mexico from Central America? Why are they [sect leaders] using the same tactics [as in Guatemala]? This proselytizing, as we have seen elsewhere, aggravates tensions and sharpens disagreements that already are volatile here.[598]

The bishops were most likely referring to the sharp rise of evangelical Protestantism in Guatemala during its civil war. Between 1982 and1983 President Efrain Ríos Montt engaged in a scorched earth campaign that was meant to eradicate the Guerilla Army of

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[596] Bartolomé Carrasco Briseño, Jesús C. Alba, Samuel Ruiz García, Arturo Lona Reyes, Hermenegildo Ramírez, "Vivir Cristianamente el Compromiso Político," *Obispos de la región pacifico sur*, February 27, 1982, 222-223. Original Spanish: "Se ha llegado a poner de manifiesto en la Región que algunas de las sectas protestantes de misioneros norteamericanos insisten en persuadir que 'debemos estar bajo las indicaciones de Estados Unidos, porque los norteamericanos son mas buenos, más inteligentes, mas fuertes.' Entre los propaladores de esta propaganda están también los Mormones y los Testigos de Jehová. A causa de esto o en conexión con esto, ha habido muertos, quemas de imágenes e incendios de capillas."

[597] Bartolomé Carrasco Briseño, et al., "Vivir Cristianamente el Compromiso Político," *Obispos de la región pacifico sur*, 222-223.

[598] Carrasco Briseño, et al., "Vivir Cristianamente el Compromiso Político," 218.

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the Poor (EGP).[599] Ríos Montt, a Church of the Word pastor and aid recipient from American right-wing televangelists, compared his assault against the guerrillas as a Christian crusade to root out Satan and advance the Kingdom of God.[600]

The Bishops saw clear divisions in indigenous communities overwhelmed by Protestantism. They argued that because of sectarianism caused by Protestant *sectas,* physical violence, despondency, and social chaos was becoming ever present in Oaxacan *pueblos*.[601] However, Oaxacan Archbishop Carrasco Briseño was careful to differentiate between "*secta*" and historic denominations that participated in the World Council of Churches (WCC). "Not all of the Protestants act in the same manner…The sects generally have neither a body of doctrine nor organization hierarchy, and they are extremely aggressive against the doctrines and the practices of the Catholic Church. But out of the denominations represented in the World Council, some contribute sincerely to ecumenical dialogue and collaborate regularly with us."[602]

The Southern Pacific Episcopacy abhorred *secta* criticism of Catholic rituals associated with saint's day fiestas. The Oaxacan hierarchy certainly agreed that

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[599] See Virginia Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala under General Efraín Rios Montt, 1982-1983* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), for an excellent account of Montt's use of evangelical Protestantism to justify the slaughter of Mayan *guerillas.*

[600] See Stoll, *Is Latin America turning Protestant?*, for background to the U.S. Religious Right's ties to Central America in the 1980s. See also Marlise Simons, "Latin America's New Gospel," *New York Times,* November 7, 1982, for an investigative report of Ríos Montt's leadership role in the evangelical Christian "Church of the World" in Guatemala.

[601] Carrasco Briseño, Jesús C. Alba, Samuel Ruiz García, Arturo Lona Reyes, Hermenegildo Ramírez, "Vivir Cristianamente el Compromiso Político," *Obispos de la región pacifico sur*, February 27, 1982, 218.

[602] Carrasco Briseño, Jesús C. Alba, Samuel Ruiz García, Arturo Lona Reyes, Hermenegildo Ramírez, "Carta Pastoral," *Obispos de la región pacifico sur,* October 12, 1981, 223. Original Spanish: "Pero no todos los protestantes actúan de la misma manera. Hay que distinguir entre las 'sectas' y las 'denominaciones' que están representadas en el Consejo Mundial de las Iglesias. Las sectas generalmente no tienen un cuerpo de doctrina ni organización jerárquica y se manifiestan sumamente agresivas contra la doctrina y las practica de la Iglesia Católica. Entre las denominaciones representadas en el Consejo Mundial de las Iglesias, algunas se prestan al dialogo y una colaboración sincera."

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alcoholism was a serious problem in indigenous communities. It also understood that some rituals practiced in indigenous communities were borderline sacrilegious. However, in their pastoral guide in 1984, the Bishops warned local priests to be wary of the *sectas'* approach:

> The Religious sects assail people and alcoholic communities with fundamental, paternalistic attitudes and frightening threats against the drinkers. Many times this does successfully distance people from alcohol. But unfortunately, all those who are recipients of these aggressions from the sects turn to a totally individualistic life, separated not just from alcohol, but also specifically isolating themselves from the economic, social, political, and cultural commitments that the historical processes requires for the liberation of the *pueblos*. While combating alcoholism is laudable, the means by which the sects go about achieving this and the limited outcomes are not pastorally best for these individuals.[603]

Therefore, the bishops acknowledged the negative impact alcoholism had in the *pueblos.* However, along with the requirement that *secta* adherents stop drinking, they also adopted other attitudes and habits that prevented these communities from fighting for their basic human rights. By isolating themselves politically, socially, culturally, and economically from their neighbors, *secta* members could not unite under one umbrella of resistance as Christians or as members of an indigenous group to combat state violence.

The Oaxacan archdiocese also was aware of the larger context of state repression. In addition to supporting indigenous rights, the Oaxacan Catholic Church was involved in the Solidarity Movement in Poland. In his homily on January 31, 1982, Archbishop Carrasco noted Oaxaca City's Catholic marches organized in solidarity with Poland. He

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[603] Carrasco Briseño, et. al., "Vivir Cristianamente el Compromiso Político," *Obispos de la región pacifico sur*, February 27, 1982, 477. Original Spanish: "Las sectas religiosas asaltan a las personas y comunidades alcohólicas con actitudes fundamentalistas, paternalistas, y amenazas aterradoras contra los bebedores. Muchas veces todo esto si logra distanciar a las personas del alcohol. Pero desgraciadamente, todos los que reciben estas agresiones de las sectas llegan a una vida totalmente individualista, separada no únicamente del alcohol, sino también expresamente aislada de los compromisos económicos, sociales, políticos y culturales que requiere el procesos histórico y la liberación de os pueblos. Por más que sea loable el logro de dejar el alcohol, los medios por los que las sectas logran esto y los fines limitados que se proponen no son los que pastoralmente mas convienen."

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posited that the repression against Polish Catholics was similar to the human rights violations in Guatemala and El Salvador. Carrasco also reiterated his preference for the poor and underrepresented in Oaxaca.[604] The Church positioned itself as an advocate for repressed and vulnerable groups in contrast to *sectas* such as the ones in Central America who supported the military.

This concern about the *sectas'* growth was the main theme of the Catholic Church's national Episcopal conference in Toluca in 1988. The Oaxaca archdiocese expressed particular concern about Protestant groups dividing communities and spreading a "doctrine totally foreign to what was proposed by Christ."[605] The Oaxacan archdiocese, with its progressive archbishop Carrasco Briseño, preferred to depict Christ as a fighter for social justice; Christians should not have to wait for the rapture to experience his righteousness. The archdiocese blamed groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses for creating serious problems in Oaxaca by dividing communities and taking advantage of illiterate people. Oaxacan archdiocese spokesman Daniel Quiroga Dorantes stated: "This is a situation of concern to the Catholic Church because it does not want a struggle or bloodshed between native people who are easy prey for the Protestant sects because of their poor living conditions."[606] To that end, the archdiocese noted: "The Church is not

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[604] Roberto Santiago, "Testimonio de libertad y paz de la grey Católica," *Noticias,* February 1, 1982.

[605] Abraham Cruz, "Desestabilizan los Protestantes," *El Imparcial,* April 16, 1988. Original Spanish: "Los grupos protestantes practican una doctrina totalmente ajena a lo propuesto por Cristo."

[606] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Sin embargo detrás de toda su doctrina pretende el objeto de dividir y después desestabilizar a las comunidades. Una situación que preocupa a la iglesia Católica por qué no quiere una lucha o que corre sangre entre los indígenas quienes son presa fácil de las sectas protestantes por sus precarias condiciones de vida."

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worried about losing followers, what it's worried about is the damage that these groups cause in the communities." [607]

The competition from Christian rivals was "as vexing to the Vatican" as the spread of liberation theology in previous decades.[608] In May of 1990, Pope John Paul II traveled to Mexico again for the second of his five trips to Mexico. During his tour of southern states where Protestantism continued to proliferate, John Paul II repeatedly blamed Catholic bishops and priests for not offering enough outreach to the Mexicans who had "broken the link of saving grace, joining the sects."[609] At his largest open-air mass in Mexico City, John Paul II directed a special message to Mexican Protestants: "I would like to meet with you one by one to tell you: come back to the fold of the church, your mother."[610]

With a ratio of one priest for every 13,000 parishioners in Latin America, Catholic priests in rural zones often only managed to offer mass once a month in individual parishes.[611] The extensive educational prerequisites for seminary training, vows of celibacy, and diminished economic resources made it difficult for the Mexican Catholic church—as in other regions—to ordain enough priests. In isolated areas, Catholic deacons, catechists, and nuns took on the role of priests, with deacons

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[607] Ibid. Original Spanish: "La iglesia no teme perder fieles, sino le preocupa el daño que esos grupos provocan en las comunidades."

[608] Alessandra Stanley, "Pope Is Returning to Mexico with New Target: Capitalism," *New York Times,* January 22, 1999.

[609] Rohter, "Pope, in Mexico, Faces Rising Protestant Tide," *New York Times,* May 12, 1990.

[610] Rohter, "Pope, in Mexico." See also Stanley, "Pope Is Returning to Mexico," for *New York Times* reporting on the continued Vatican criticism of "the invasion of the sects," as well as John Paul II's shift to espousing liberation theology messages on economic justice two decades later from when he first condemned the philosophy.

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performing all sacraments except reconciliation and matrimony.[612] In Chiapas, for example, native deacons still outnumber priests four to one.[613] In the 1980s, the Catholic Church in southern Mexico was hemorrhaging followers at alarming rates, mostly due to its perpetual shortage of priests and the explosion of evangelical Protestant denominations in high poverty regions. To that end, the Catholic Church was particularly concerned with reaching indigenous populations in remote zones.[614] At the conclusion of his 1990 Mexico visit, John Paul II warned, "The success of proselytism by sects and new religious groups cannot be ignored. Pastoral policies will have to be revised so that each particular church can offer the faithful more personalized religious care."[615] This more personalized outreach was a core component to Pope John Paul II's on-going 'New Evangelization' campaign to rekindle the appeal of Catholicism and reaffirm Catholicism as the only 'true Christian' religion.[616]

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[611] Sociologist Enrique Marroquín notes that as of 1992, the archdiocese of Oaxaca had only 160 ordained priests. That meant that one parish priest could be responsible for ministering to 15 to 80 small communities, an overwhelming task. Marroquín, *El Botín Sagrado*, 42.

[612] See Marroquín, *El Botín Sagrado,* for a description of rivalries between nuns, priests, and catechists in rural zones of Oaxaca, 41-45.

[613] As of 2007, there were only 330 Deacons, 84 Priests, and 8,000 catechists in the diocese for Chiapas responsible for a population of 1.5 mostly indigenous Catholics in the area. In 2001, the Vatican restricted the bishops of San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas from ordaining new deacons. The Vatican argued that under former bishop Samuel Ruiz the Deacons became too numerous and acted, at times, independently of the Catholic Church. Diego Cavellos, "Mexico: Vatican Incomprehension Stymies Pastoral Plan in Chiapas." http://www.ipsnews.net/2007/01/mexico-vatican-incomprehension-stymies-pastoral-plan-in-chiapas/, accessed June 1, 2012.

[614] Pope John Paul II, "The Task of the Latin American Bishops," *Origins* 12 (March 24, 1983): 659-662. This speech given in Haiti in 1983 is thought to be the first time the Pope used the term "New Evangelization." See Dave Nodar, "What are Characteristics of the New Evangelization," for the U.S. Catholic Church's description of the importance of the New Evangelization in Latin America http://www.christlife.org/evangelization/articles/C_newevan.html , accessed June 1, 2012.

[615] Alessandra Stanley, quoting John Paul II's 1990 statement, in "Pope Urges Bishops to Minister to the Rich," *New York Times,* January 24, 1999. See also Clyde Haberman, "Speak out on Social Issues, Pope Tells Mexico Bishops," in *New York Times,* May 13, 1990.

[616] Pope John Paul II, "The New Evangelization: Homily of Blessed John Paul II in Mexico," Veracruz, Mexico, 1990. http://www.jp2shrine.org/jp/en/ev/jpii.html , accessed June 1, 2012. See Kristin

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In contrast, Pentecostal leaders trained their new ministers fast and frequently with few formal requirements. These churches responded intimately to local needs of communities.[617] In fact, while the most visible Pentecostal denomination right now in Latin America is the Assemblies of God, 80% of Pentecostals belong to small non-denominational churches.[618] The Catholic Church tried to arrest this growth in Mexico by publishing short simple pamphlets that drew the reader in with the rhetorical question in bold font, "Who founded your church?"[619] The flier was directed toward former Catholics who had converted to other Christian denominations and included a list of 28 churches from Adventist to the YMCA and listed the year the church was established, the place, and the founder. For example, Jehovah's Witness is listed as founded by Charles T. Russell in Philadelphia in 1876, the Pentecostals in 1905 in Los Angeles, and La Luz del Mundo (Light of the World) as founded in 1926 in Guadalajara, Mexico, by Aarón Joaquín Flores. On the other hand, the document lists 'Catholic' at the bottom of the list with its founder as Jesus Christ in Israel in the year 33. The message is clear here: Catholicism is the only *true* Church for Mexicans. The bottom of the flier invites fallen

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Norget, "Progressive Theology and Popular Religiosity in Oaxaca, Mexico," in *Ethnology* 36:1 (Winter, 1997): 67-83, for a discussion of the strained relationship between the "New Evangelization" campaign and popular religiosity in the archdiocese of Oaxaca post 1992. Finally, see Edward L. Cleary, "John Paul Cries 'Wolf': Misreading the Pentecostals," in *Commonweal,* November 20, 1992, 7-8.

[617] Comunicación e Información de la Mujer (CIMAC), "Acelerado crecimiento del cristianismo evangélico en México," May 14, 2001 http://www.cimac.org.mx/noticias/semanal01/s01050201.html Accessed June 11, 2012.

[618] David Gonzalez, "A Sliver of a Storefront, a Faith on the Rise," *New York Times,* January 14, 2007.

[619] "¿Quien fundó tu iglesia?" Mexican National Episcopacy, 1993. I am indebted to Father Enrique Marroquín for giving me copies of the episcopacies' re-evangelization pamphlets from the early 1990s.

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Catholics to "Come back, without fear! The Church is waiting for you with open arms to meet again with Christ."[620]

The Pentecostal strategy outflanked the Pope's New Evangelization Campaign. In 1990, 89.7% of Mexicans identified as Catholic.[621] In the 2010 census, just 82.7% of Mexicans reported they were Catholic.[622] Sociologist Roberto J. Blancarte estimates that 1,300 Mexican Catholics left the Church each day between 2000 and 2010.[623] In contrast, Protestantism (combining historical, Pentecostal, and biblically based denominations) almost doubled. In 2000, there were six million Protestants in Mexico; they registered at just under eleven million in 2010.[624]

1990s Legal Changes

In December of 1991, the Mexican legislature passed reforms to Mexican Constitution Articles 3, 5, 24, 27, and 130. Known as the *Ley de Asociaciones Religiosas y Culto Público* (Religious Associations and Public Worship Act), these reforms modified the anti-clerical character of the Mexican Constitution, hence modernizing church-state relations.[625] The reforms took effect on July 15, 1992.[626] The Mexican state retained its secular status, but the reforms addressed the Catholic hierarchy's and the

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[620] "!Volved, pues sin miedo! La Iglesia os espera con los brazos abiertos para reencontraros con Cristo," Mexican National Episcopacy, 1993.

[621] Geo-Mexico, "Religious Diversity is Increasing in Mexico," May 11, 2011, http://geo-Mexico.com/?p=4056, accessed June 12, 2012.

[622] INEGI, *XIII Censo de Población y Vivienda, 2010.*

[623] Julian Rodríguez Marin, "More Than 1,000 Mexicans Leave Catholic Church Daily," *Latin American Herald Tribune,* April 3, 2010 http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=390745&CategoryId=14091, accessed June 1, 2012.

[624] INEGI, *XIII Censo de Población y Vivienda, 2010.*

[625] Roberto J. Blancarte, "Recent Changes in Church-State Relations in Mexico: An Historical Approach," *Journal of Church and State* 35:4 (1993):802.

[626] *Diario Oficial de la Federación,* 15 July, 1992, http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/24.pdf , accessed June 1, 2012.

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Vatican's long held objections to the Constitution. Despite having the second largest population of Catholics in the world—Brazil is number one—from 1917 until 1992, Mexico had the most anti-clerical Constitution in all of Latin America. This period stretched from the 1917 Constitution, which sought drastically to limit the influence of the Catholic Church in political life and property holdings, to the advent of neo-liberalism, which prioritized a less invasive state. At the same time, by repairing its relationship with the Catholic Church, Mexican law provided for greater tolerance of all religions.

These new 1992 modifications allowed clergy to wear religious garb in public, reduced restrictions on religious education, and allowed religious personnel to vote in elections. With these same changes, Article 27 of the Constitution was amended so that collectively held ejidal land could be privatized; agrarian reform ostensibly ended.[627] Consequently, the reforms also had key implications for Protestant groups, especially fundamental evangelical groups: Religious buildings were no longer national patrimony and individual churches could own the land and building where they worshiped, making the permit process less onerous.[628] The modifications also made it legal to conduct religious worship outside of church, such as open-air services and processions, as long as the congregation received a permit ahead of time.

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[627] For a background to the EZLN's opposition to Salinas's agrarian reform package, see Neil Harvey, *The Chiapas Rebellion: The Struggle for Land and Democracy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); George Collier, *Basta! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas* (Food First Books, 2005), and June Nash, "The Fiesta of the Word: The Zapatista Uprising and Radical Democracy in Mexico," in *American Anthropologist* 99:2 (June 1997): 261-274. For a comparison of resistance to Article 27 modifications in Oaxaca, see Rosaria Angela Pisa, "Popular Responses to the Reform of Article 27: State Intervention and Community Resistance in Oaxaca," in *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development,* 23:2/3 (Summer-Fall 1994): 267-306 and Lynn Stephen, *¡Zapata Lives! Histories and Cultural Politics in Southern Mexico,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

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Many of these new modifications addressed the issues at the heart of the 1926-1929 *Cristero* conflict and other deeper grievances that harkened back to Juárez's War of *La Reforma.* President Carlos Salinas de Gortari stated that the changes were not to restore the Catholic Church's privileges but rather "to reconcile the definitive secularization of our society with effective religious freedom."[629] For the first time since liberal President Benito Juárez's execution of Catholic Emperor Maximilian I in 1867, Mexico had diplomatic relations with the Vatican.[630] Visa restrictions for foreign missionaries were eased somewhat and regional quotas on Mexican priests ended. The modifications also reinforced Mexico's status as a religiously pluralistic nation. Most importantly, easing the restrictions of national patrimony "allowed minority groups to emerge from their relative segregation and develop their activity more openly and more effectively."[631] Because the process of registering a church was now easier and Protestants did not have to give the state ownership of the building or property, registration of Protestant churches increased substantially.

While scholars tend to focus on the modifications in ejidal land distribution in Article 27 that helped precipitate the 1994 Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) Revolution in Chiapas, Salinas's modifications to the anti-clerical provisions of the 1917 Constitution were widely criticized by leftists and even the president's former Minister of the Interior. Opponents of the religious changes argued that Salinas was for

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[628] The *Religious and Public Worship Associations Act* was officially implemented on July 15, 1992. http://iclrs.org/content/blurb/files/Mexico.pdf , accessed May 15, 2012.

[629] Blancarte, "Recent Changes in Church-State Relations in Mexico, 786.

[630] France occupied Mexico from 1862-1867, placing Austrian Maximilian as France's puppet emperor. The Catholic hierarchy backed the French against Liberal President Benito Juárez.

[631] Blancarte, "Recent Changes, 803.

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systematically dismantling essential features of the postrevolutionary state.[632] At the same time, Catholic supporters also worried that the revision to Article 130 gave too much power and recognition to las sectas in its reference to Mexico as a religiously plural nation with diverse Iglesias and other types of *asociaciones religiosas*. Staunch Catholics argued that there was only one true Church in Mexico; any reference to la iglesia in the plural form was incorrect as the Protestant churches were *sectas.* "The *sectas* can never be considered part of 'the Church,' wrote José Ignacio Echegaray, "they left 'the Church.'"[633]

Evident from even a cursory reading of the editorial pages in leading Mexican papers, Catholics offered substantial criticism to modifications of Article 130. In an *Excélsior* article on November 24, 1993, the editorial cautioned against permitting fundamental Christian groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses to operate in Mexico by arguing that Mexico would be essentially condoning millennialist cults that historically ended in mass suicide or murder such as the Charles Manson's Family in 1969, Jonestown in 1978, or the Branch Davidians in 1993.[634] On July 21, 1993, Rafael Barrera García argued in Mexico City's *El Heraldo* that if Jehovah's Witnesses were not willing to salute the Mexican flag, then they should not enjoy all the benefits of Mexican citizenship. That is to say that Jehovah's Witnesses could not assert that they did not

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[632] Adolfo Gilly, "Chiapas and the Rebellion in the Enchanted World," in *Rural Revolt in Mexico: U.S. Intervention and the Domain of Subaltern Politics,* Daniel Nugent, ed., (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 191-192.

[633] José Ignacio Echegaray, "Iglesia solo hay una en el Mundo," *Excélsior,* January 6, 1994, 50.

[634] "El fanatismo iconoclastas de los secuaces de María Davi recuerda dolorosos tragedias," *Excélsior,* November 24, 1993, A53.

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recognize political boundaries or man's law, just God's, while also enjoying the protections and liberties that Mexican citizenship provided.[635]

Usos y costumbres

As a result of continued indigenous agitation for rights throughout Latin America and with varying degrees of success in the mid-1990s, the Mexican government contemplated indigenous autonomy and self-determination at the regional level.[636] In Oaxaca, the religious modifications certainly helped Protestant church growth by easing restrictions on missionaries and making the church permit process less onerous. But, three years later, the legalization of the usos y costumbres laws brought new challenges for Protestants. While these communities had operated under usos y costumbres since either before the Spanish Conquest or beginning with the Conquest, the fact that the Oaxacan state government—the only state in Mexico to do so— officially recognized this concept altered the situation dramatically.[637] In a sense, by legalizing usos y costumbres,

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[635] Rafael Barrera García, "Testigos de Jehová," *Heraldo*, July 21, 1993, A7.

[636] 1992, the 500th anniversary of Columbus's 'discovery' of the Americas, was also an important year for pan-indigenous organizing across the Americas. See Deborah J. Yashar, *Contesting Citizenship in Latin America: The Rise of Indigenous Movements and the Postliberal Challenge* (Cambridge University Press, 2005) for a discussion of how framing social movements by indigenous identities has been particularly successful for movements in Bolivia and Ecuador but not so much in Peru.

[637] Scholars are divided over whether *usos y costumbres* is truly a vestige of pre-Hispanic governance or a colonial institution. For background on the historical significance of the cargo system, see John K Chance and William B. Taylor, "Cofradías and Cargos: An Historical Perspective on the Mesoamerican Civil-religious Hierarchy," in *American Ethnologist* (12, 1986): 1-26. In contrast to Chance and Taylor, Michael Kearney and Carole Nagengast describe *tequio* as "an ancient system of obligation that has been utilized by the Aztecs and Mixtecs for community projects," Kearney and Nagengast, "Mixtec Ethnicity: Social Identity, Political Consciousness, and Political Activism," *Latin American Research Review* XXV, (2:1990), 89. Anthropologist Alicia Barabas, interprets usos y costumbres as an essential aspect of village organization. See Barabas, *Dones, dueños y santos: Ensayo sobre religiones en Oaxaca* (México, DF: INAH, 2006), 231-232. See also Ronald Loewe, *Maya or Mestizo? Nationalism, Modernity and its Discontents,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), for an excellent discussion of the cargo system's contested history in Oaxaca. Finally, see also James B. Greenberg, "Sanctity and Resistance in Closed Corporate Indigenous Communities: Coffee Money, Violence, and Ritual

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the state was allowing local communities to set the social pulse of the town regardless of the needs of minority groups.

As discussed in Chapter Four, since the 1970s, Mexican indigenous congresses and rights groups called for a greater respect toward indigenous rights and self determination. In principle, legalizing usos y costumbres acknowledges the rights to dignity and autonomy that so many indigenous communities fought to maintain since the Spanish Conquest.[638] However, the legislation also leaves open opportunities for abuse of the system. Following the 1994 EZLN uprising, the Oaxacan government pushed forward the usos y costumbres legislation as a response to the "efecto Chiapas."[639] However, the much-anticipated national indigenous rights bill never went through. Critics of the San Andrés Accords of 1996 argued that it would only serve to "balkanize the nation."[640] For its part, the EZLN would only support the bill if it did not grant individual states the right to interpret "autonomy" as it saw fit. The EZLN argued that, for example, Mixtecs living across Oaxaca, Puebla, and Guerrero should have an unwavering and uniform right to autonomy as a people regardless of territorial boundaries.

Organization in Chatino Communities in Oaxaca," in *Class, Politics and Popular Religion in Mexico and Central America,* American Anthropological Association, 1990), 95-114.

[638] David Recondo, "Las Costumbres de la democracia: multiculturalismo y democratización en Oaxaca," http://www.scribd.com/doc/49833038/las-costumbres-de-la-democracia-en-oaxaca , 8, accessed June 1, 2012. See David D. Gow and Joanne Rappaport "The Indigenous Public Voice:The Multiple Idioms of Modernity in Native Cacua," in Kay B. Warren, ed, *Indigenous Movements, Self-Representation, and the State in Latin America*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002),57-65, for a discussion of the 1991 Colombian Constitution's provisions for customary law in indigenous communities.

[639] Recondo, "Las Costumbres de la democracia," http://www.scribd.com/doc/49833038/las-costumbres-de-la-democracia-en-oaxaca, 10., accessed June 1, 2012.

[640] Ginger Thomson, "Mexico Congress Approves Altered Rights Bill," *New York Times,* April 30, 2001.

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Religious intolerance cases in Oaxaca are often compared to the expulsion of San Juan Chamulan Protestants from their Chiapan villages in the mid-1990s.[641] Between 1968 and 2010, some 35,000 evangelical Chamulans left or were expelled by force from the district. In my interviews, many Protestants compared their experiences to their hermanos in the neighboring state.[642] In Chiapas, the EZLN rebellion also took on a religious veneer; Zapatistas credited much of their ideology as stemming from Catholic liberation theology, often taught by Archbishop Samuel Ruiz of San Cristobal, Chiapas. Many evangelical Christians ended up siding with the state government, however, and in some cases, joining paramilitary organizations that attacked Zapatista communities. For many disenfranchised Mayans in Chiapas, the EZLN rebellion offered the opportunity to protest the loss of their rights to ejidal lands following Salinas' modification of Article 27 of the Constitution effectively ending agrarian reform. The movement also addressed many of the serious economic, health, and educational grievances against the state. The Zapatista rebellion not only united Mayans in Chiapas but also received support from

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[641] Between 1968 and 2010, some 35,000 evangelical Chamulans left or were expelled by force from the district. Ginger Thompson, "In a Warring Mexican Town, God's Will is the Issue," *New York Times, August 13, 2000.* For a new take on the San Juan Chamula conflict between traditionalist Catholics and evangelicals, see Todd Hartch, *Missionaries of the State: The Summer Institute of Linguistics, State Formation and Indigenous Mexico, 1935-1985* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 168-181 in particular. For San Juan Chamula selections written by evangelical authors, see Paul Marshall, *Their Blood Cries Out* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997) 139-143 and Arthur Bonner, *We Will not be Stopped*: *Evangelical Persecution, Catholicism and Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico* (Universal Publishers, 1999). See also Carolina Rivera Farfán, ed. *Diversidad religiosa y conflicto en Chiapas: Intereses, utopías y realidades:* (México, DF: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2005), 189-200, for an examination of conflicts in the San Juan Chamula municipality from the 1940s through 2000. For the earlier history of ladino/indigenous conflicts in San Juan Chamula over liquor licensing and how it evolved into a religious conflict, see Jan Rus, "'Comunidad Revolucionario Institucional:' The Subversion of Native Government in Highlands Chiapas 1936-1968," in Joseph Gilbert and Daniel Nugent eds., *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 290-292 in particular. For Rus's more recent analysis of San Juan Chamulan conflicts, see "The Struggle against Indigenous Caciques in Highland Chiapas: Dissent, Religion and Exile in Chamula, 1965-1977," in Alan Knight and Wil Pansters, eds., *Caciquismo in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2005), 169-200.

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indigenous peoples and leftists across Latin America. Portuguese novelist José Saramago visited Chiapas in March of 1998 to show solidarity with the victims of paramilitary violence in Acteal. In an interview, Saramago stated: "Chiapas is the body of Mexico."[643] While different to the EZLN uprising in many fundamental ways, the conversion to Protestantism is also a social-political movement, a rebellion against the status quo, and a demand for a different relationship with the state. Similarly, indigenous Oaxacans were united with other Protestants by ethnicity and shared religious identities.

One important question about the usos y costumbres legislation is why the PRI-dominated state government (every post-revolutionary governor had been a PRIista until the 2010 state election) chose to legalize usos y costumbres in 1995 and not earlier or later? Political scientist David Recondo argues that throughout the 1980s, the PRI was losing support by significant percentages in Oaxaca. In 1981, the radical Zapotec COCEI party in Juchitán became the first opposition party in the state to win a municipal election. By 1989, the leftist PRD inched closer to overturning PRI electoral dominance in rural communities. To combat opposition gains, PRI governor Diódoro Carrasco Altamirano in 1995 put forth usos y costumbres legislation that would ban *all* political parties from the three-quarters of Oaxacan municipalities that ostensibly practiced usos y

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[642] In particular, Isidoro Santiago Ojeda emphasized the shared problems faced by indigenous Protestants in both Chiapas and Oaxaca. Interview by author, Yosondúa, Oaxaca, September 2010.

[643] José Saramago, as quoted in *La Revista,* March 15, 1998. http://www.elmundo.es/larevista/num129/textos/chiapa2.html, accessed June 1, 2012. Original full Spanish quotation: "Acteal es un lugar de la memoria que no puede de ninguna manera desaparecer. Sabemos lo que ocurrió y no lo queremos olvidar. Chiapas es el cuerpo de México. La sociedad civil debería admirar no solo a los indios sino a los que se levantaron para defender a esos mismos indígenas."

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costumbres.[644] In actuality, this meant that those communities would have little exposure to the PRD or the PAN, and local leaders, while not officially representing the PRI party, would still toe the Institutional Party's line. Recondo stated: "Under the guise of a 'rescue of tradition', new political actors invented practices that never before existed."[645] Similarly, political scientist Todd Eisenstadt warns that advocates of indigenous autonomy "should also factor into their calculations the judicial 'no man's land,' which could result if excessively flexible customary practices are adopted without enforcement of accompanying laws."[646]

Despite the modifications to the Constitution in 1992, the problems with expulsions and denial of resources continued.[647] According to Elías Betanzos Luis, leader of Consejo Oaxaqueño de Unidad Evangélica, the violence against Evangelicals increased as new churches continued to emerge. He estimated that there are currently 2,000 evangelical Protestant church buildings in Oaxaca alone.[648] As of 2011, the Director of Religious Affairs in Oaxaca, Francisco Zavaleta Rojas, stated that there were 200 Evangelical refugees living in shelters, church basements, or with relatives in Oaxaca

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[644] See Todd A. Eisenstadt, "Usos y costumbres and Postelectoral Conflicts in Oaxaca, Mexico, 1995-2004," in *Latin American Research Review,* 42:1 (February: 2007): 52-77, for the background to why *usos y costumbres* was so appealing to the state government and indigenous leaders.

[645] Recondo, "Las Costumbres de la democracia: multiculturalismo y democratización en Oaxaca," 19.

[646] Eisenstadt, "Strengthening Indigenous Rights While Weakening the Rule of Law? Customary Elections, the State, and Social Conflict in Mexico," article in preparation for *Comparative Politics*, 23.

[647] Freedom House indices list frequent reports of harassment of evangelicals and Jehovah's Witnesses in Chiapas and Oaxaca. http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2009/Mexico, accessed June 1, 2012. Chiapas ranks number one in Mexico for religious conflicts and Oaxaca comes in second. US State Department, "Report on International Religious Freedom: Mexico," February 2009. www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127397, accessed June 1, 2012.

[648] Citalli López, "Persecución religiosa, por aumento de grupos evangélicos," *Noticias,* February 23, 2011 *http://www.noticiasnet.mx/portal/principal/persecucion-religiosa-aumento-grupos-evangelicos* Accessed June 22, 2012.

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City unable to return to their home villages.[649] Twenty-four refugee families have not been able to return to one Sierra Norte community since 1984.[650]

A nationally publicized case occurred in the Northern Sierra community of Ixtlán de Juárez in March of 2010. Evangelicals refused to give money toward *semana santa* (Holy week) celebrations. The previous year, in 2009, the Catholic community members tried to burn down a Protestant church, allegedly also threatening to lynch all the Evangelicals in the community, including children. The community's authorities were cited by the Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos (CNDH/National Commission on Human Rights) for failure to respect religious freedom violence and denying Evangelicals access to government social programs for women and children such as *Oportunidades.*[651] While the DAR and the CNDH are working with evangelical Christian refugees to return them to their homes, expelled individuals are also turning to the internet to attract national and international audiences.

Violence against religious minorities in Oaxaca is a popular genre on evangelical missionary websites and especially *YouTube.* Short videos posted by indigenous Oaxacans on *YouTube* serve as rallying call for Mexican and North American evangelical Christian groups to visit Oaxaca. When typing "persecución religiosa en Oaxaca" or "evangélicos en Oaxaca" into the search engine, dozens of amateur and professional short videos come up. Some of the videos are filmed by representatives of the North American

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[649] "México: Conflictos religiosos en Oaxaca," http://www.noticieromilamex.com/mexico-conflictos-religiosos-en-oaxaca/ March 18, 2011. "México: Evangélicos expulsados por intolerancia religiosa buscan regresar a comunidad," http://diarioberea.blogdiario.com/1304577240/ , accessed June 22, 2012.

[650] Citalli López, "Más de 200 desplazados por intolerancia religiosa," *Noticias,* February 15, 2011, http://www.noticiasnet.mx/portal/principal/mas-200-desplazados-intolerancia-religiosa

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Christian defense group "Voice of the Martyrs." Founded in 1967, VOM is based in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. It often sends groups of Canadian and US evangelical Christians to provide spiritual guidance, food, and medical support to indigenous Chiapan and Oaxacan communities where there are complaints of religious intolerance.[652] It also disseminates videos and testimonies of expelled Christian refugees throughout the globe.

One particularly dramatic video recorded shakily on a digital camera captures the expulsion of an evangelical family from San Andrés Yaa, a Zapotec community in the Sierra Norte, on May 28, 2011.[653] The sister of one of the men being expelled narrated the six minute film. About forty townspeople and municipal authorities literally marched the family out of town. Imeldo Amaya Gabriel had been charged with not supporting usos y costumbres and therefore was fined and later incarcerated by municipal authorities. Amaya Gabriel had previously taken his case to DAR but to no avail. Once outside of the boundaries of the town, Amaya Gabriel delivered a message directed toward Governor Gabino Cue (2010-present) and the Oaxacan State Attorney General's Office. Amaya Gabriel held up to the camera an official paper just signed the previous week by the evangelical families and the municipal president in San Andrés Yaá. The compromise, negotiated by mediators from DAR and a district court, was supposed to guarantee safe passage for Amaya Garbriel and his family to return to the town.

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[651] www.christianpost.com/news, January 25, 2011.

[652] See http://www.persecution.net/mexico.htm for the organization's updated "prayer bulletins" for southern Mexico. See http://persecution.tv/video?task=videodirectlink&id=349 to watch VOM's documentary of persecution in Mexico. See also James & Marti Hefley, *By their Blood: Christian Martyrs of the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 543-635, and Paul Marshall, *Their Blood Cries Out* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1997), 137-148.

[653] "Gobierno estatal coadyuva en solución de conflicto de San Andrés Yaa por la vía conciliatoria," http://www.oaxaca.gob.mx/?p=5611, May 28, 2011.

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However, as Amaya Gabriel states, none of the local authorities honored the agreement. Amaya Gabriel looked into the camera and said, "I want to tell you, state authorities of Oaxaca, you have done nothing for us."[654] Amaya Gabriel and his family, however, shortly afterward placed the video on *YouTube* and immediately captured a transnational audience with 3,860 hits.

In light of the friction between usos y costumbres governance, Protestantism, and the reach of the Mexican state, as evidenced in such communities as San Andrés Yaa, the U.S. State Department has an on-going warning addressed to U.S. missionaries about religious violence in southern Mexico. The report acknowledges that the Mexican government generally respects Constitutional rights to religious freedom. However, its legal investigations and defense mechanisms are "sluggish in response" to cases of religious intolerance.[655] The Oaxacan state government is weak or ineffective in mediating local religious conflict cases. As a result, indigenous Protestants turn to the federal government, regional, national and transnational Protestant organizations, and increasingly, the internet to protest cases of religious intolerance.

Epilogue

In November of 2008 I was returning home after a day spent reading religious conflict cases in the Oaxacan State Archive. Taking my usual route from the historic center, I headed north of the *zocálo*, eventually reaching *Avenida Niños Héroes de*

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[654] "Expulsión por intolerancia religiosa en Oaxaca," http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0UMdP5Jh998, accessed July 1, 2012. Original Spanish: "Quiero decirles, autoridades superiores del Estado de Oaxaca, que sabiendo Uds. de ante mano que nosotros íbamos a regresar al pueblo, este, en verdad Uds. no nos hicieron nada. Ahora, nos volvieron a sacar…"

[655] US State Department, "Report on International Religious Freedom: Mexico," November, 17, 2010, http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010/148766.htm, accessed July 1, 2012.

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Chapultepec where Oaxaca's *Colonia Reforma* neighborhood begins. As I waited at the light across from the giant Volkswagen sign—my landmark for remembering which side street was mine—I watched an artist rubbing layers of papier mâché over his new *monos de calenda* (giant dancing puppets) in preparation for Oaxaca's city-wide celebrations for its patroness, La Virgen de La Soledad (Our Lady of Solitude) the following month. Just as I was about to cross the busy intersection, I spotted huge banners advertising a festival at a nearby sports stadium. As I got a closer look I did not recognize the older man depicted prominently on the t-shirts of the festival promoters passing by me.

The next day on the front page of the news daily *Noticias* I got my answer: Oaxaca City would soon be hosting a Luis Palau festival. Originally from Argentina, and nicknamed the Billy Graham of Latin America for the size and popularity of his crusades, Palau's 2008 "Good Music and Good News" gathering was to become the largest evangelical event in the state's history—350 Protestant churches and 170,000 Oaxacans participated in the November 14 and 15 complimentary outdoor festival. 2,000 volunteers seeking to share the Gospel connected with prospective converts through such nontraditional means as Christian rock, children's bouncy worlds, and a medical tent offering free health screenings. The Confraternidad de Pastores Cristianos Evangélicos del Estado de Oaxaca (COPACEO) organized the event.

Palau's presence in Oaxaca speaks to the strength of the evangelical Christian movement in the state. Palau only visits areas where he is guaranteed of a large audience and is financially sponsored by local churches. In the weeks following the event, Catholics complained about the government funds spent on hosting the event and letting "Palau take over the city." Additionally, they argued that it was a violation of the

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separation of church and state since Governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz closed public schools so that young children could attend the event. Opponents also suggested that PRI Governor Ruiz Ortiz, a Pentecostal, had political motives in supporting the event.[656] In contrast, COPACEO argued that the festival's use of a public space and Palau's sponsorship by the Governor's office was no different than the courtesy paid to the numerous Catholic dignitaries, including Pope John Paul II, visiting Oaxaca. COPACEO is currently the most powerful non-Catholic religious advocacy organization in Oaxaca.

Conclusion

In remote regions of Oaxaca, local leaders retained considerable political authority since the colonial era. Local officials tried to negotiate with the colonial and then Mexican government to maintain a small degree of autonomy, which allowed indigenous communities to assert agency either through local governance patterns or the benefit of distance from the capital city, and thus maintain religious and traditional continuity. This continuity is seen in both the cases discussed in this chapter of San Juan Tabaá and San Juan Juquila, Mixes. In San Juan Juquila, Mixes, the municipal mayor threatened to close down his municipal office if Oaxacan state government did not support his edict that every San Juan Juquilan contribute toward the renovation of the community's Catholic Church. In San Juan Tabaá, the community carried out the expulsion of Gerardo García Mendoza even after multiple negotiations and even after state and federal authorities told the community it was illegal to do so. Even with the threat of intervention by state authorities, local authorities still held much power over the

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[656] "Los modernos fariseos en Oaxaca,"http://blogs.elcorreo.com/puntoyaparteoaxaca/2008/11/10/los-modernos-fariseos-oaxaca-mexico/,

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social-religious realm. The local authorities were not ready for a new relationship with the state whereby individuals, not a leader representing the pueblo, could get the government's attention.

Through its newly created Department of Religious Affairs Office, the Oaxacan state government usually responded to the complaints by Pentecostals or Jehovah's Witnesses by sending officials to the communities to investigate or instituting mandatory mediation sessions. However, as this chapter has demonstrated, such mediations often did not work; expulsions, denial of services, and violence occurred before the state could carry out an investigation. With 570 municipalities in Oaxaca representing a quarter of the total municipalities in the nation, the reach of the state was limited and, at times, ambiguous. The Oaxacan state government found itself obligated to enforce two opposing mandates: "freedom of religion: and local self-government enshrined in the phrase usos y costumbres. For its part, the Catholic Church sought at the national and local level to retain parishioners in the face of mounting competition from Protestant, particularly Pentecostal and fringe Christian, denominations. At the same time, the Catholic Church was divided between its Liberation Theology and conservative wings. The inability of the Spanish Catholic clergy to dedicate sufficient personnel to Oaxaca allowed local communities to develop their own version of folk Catholicism in the colonial period. At the same time, the lack of sufficient personnel also helped pave the way for religious completion to enter these communities throughout the twentieth century.

November 8, 2008, accessed July 1, 2012.

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Chapter Six: Conclusion

"Contested Spaces: Protestantism in Oaxaca, 1920-1995" demonstrates the intersection of religious transformation, local power, and identity within the shifting agenda of the Mexican state. This dissertation has argued that Protestantism challenged collective identities in Oaxacan communities, leading to competing conceptualizations of tradition and ritual. Local religious conflicts began as differences in spiritual beliefs. But at their core, these conflicts were also about which individuals, groups, or institutions had the power and authority to determine local governance and expressions of identity—whether ethnic or community based— in the modern Mexican nation-state. Oaxaca's long history of autonomy and geographical and political fragmentation, coupled with the inability of the central government to enforce the Federal Constitution, has led to political stalemates over the individual rights of Protestant converts to exercise their religious beliefs and the collective rights of indigenous peoples to determine the social, political, and spiritual norms of their communities. In Oaxaca, a change in one's religious affiliation is a powerful shift in identity, moving from traditional Catholicism into a separate realm, which may be more individualistic or more group oriented. Overall, religious conversion serves as a major alteration in local identity and loyalty.

Protestant converts threatened local communal adhesion by not participating in traditional obligations such as tequio or the cargo system. Given Oaxaca's distance from Mexico City and even more importantly, indigenous communities' isolation from the state capital, local communities had long set the tone for governance by usos y costumbres. With the sluggish response of the state to enforce constitutional law in Oaxaca, "that far off region of our Republic," and by the 1990s the state's increasing

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support of indigenous autonomy and customary law, Protestant converts sought other means to assert their individual rights to religious freedom.[657] By reporting local religious conflicts to state and national political and religious authorities, indigenous Protestants opened their communities to outside scrutiny by Oaxaca City ministers, the National Evangelical Defense Committee, the Ministry of the Interior's Office, the Department of Religious Affairs, migrants living in other parts of Mexico, and U.S. missionary organizations. At other times, Protestant converts negotiated traditional obligations, offering to participate in some communal obligations but not Catholic-based ones.

This dissertation has also demonstrated how conversion to Protestantism broke down hierarchies in local communities. Instead of remaining loyal to community adhesion through participation in traditional rituals and saint day fiestas, Pentecostals and other fundamentalist Christians sought different types of religious connections that prevailed over their rootedness in local identities. By creating their own churches and providing Protestant outreach in their communities, evangélicos created not just their own religious space but also a new, unsanctioned social space. This new space at times upended traditional social, political, and generational divisions. Such acts of dissension caused very real repercussions at the familial, community and state level.

The growth of Protestantism in twentieth century Mexico also brought to light the question of which individuals and organizations had the right to enter indigenous communities. Did the National Indigenist Institute (INI), the Ministry of Public Education (SEP), or the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) have indigenous peoples' best interests in mind? Did the Mexico City based anthropologists and sociologists who

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[657] *El Atalaya Bautista,* "Nuestra Capilla en Tlacochahuaya,"596, August 12, 1926.

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initiated the national condemnation of the SIL in 1979 speak for indigenous communities? For the National College of Ethnologists and Social Anthropologists (CEAS), the SIL's entrenched presence in indigenous Mexico represented a violation of Mexico's national sovereignty and local indigenous rights to autonomy, despite the organization's decades of translating difficult and less commonly known native languages, something the Mexican state struggled to accomplish. Local indigenous leaders fought for the continuation of local rights to autonomy, resources and governance in the face of increasing neo-liberal economic policies that further drove southern Mexico into grinding rural poverty. By enforcing collective work projects through participation in tequio, local communities maintained a mechanism that had operated since pre-Hispanic times to ensure the vitality and independence of their communities.

In this dissertation, I have demonstrated the strength of violence or the threat of violence in resisting the spread of Protestantism. Forced expulsion or in extreme cases, the murder of Protestants, was a common local reaction to Protestant growth. These conflicts in Oaxaca had and continue to have enormous human consequences. At the individual and familial level, conversion to Protestantism could lead to expulsion and the denial of local resources—water allotments, ejidal land rights, access to corn grinding facilities, electricity, and finally, privileges to the rural tienda campesina. Conversion also impacted family solidarity. In many communities, divisions were not just between Protestants and Catholics but were evident within immediate and extended families. Choosing a spouse of a different faith potentially brings familial division. As San Juan Tabaá Pentecostal Gerardo Mendoza García mentioned in Chapter Five, Catholic men marrying Protestant women pay a fine or risk losing ejidal land rights since they will no

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longer fully participate in tequio or the cargo system. Additionally, as is evidenced in such examples as the two Espina men in San Juan Juquila, religious conflicts cut across families. One can infer that Jehovah's Witness Conrado Espina and Juquila mayor Félix Tiburcio Espina are distantly related. The fact that these cousins are on the opposing sides in the religious-political dispute in that town speaks to the very local and often intimate roots of the conflict.

Conversion to Protestantism also entailed a breaking away from community centered identity to one that is distinct from a community based one, to an identity which might have more in common with Protestants in other villages or regions of Mexico. To a certain extent, Protestant indigenous identity repudiates a shared collective identity and a shared history of resistance to outsiders and instead emphasizes a religious identity that transcends local borders. Mendoza García, the Pentecostal migrant featured in Chapter Five, provides intimate insight into the friction between constitutional and customary law. Mendoza García described how in his initial petitions to local and state authorities over his refusal to contribute funds toward a Catholic Church renovation project, he was repeatedly admonished "Hay que cooperar con el pueblo [You have to co-operate with the people/town]."[658] After a subsequent mediation session in Oaxaca City organized by national and state government offices, Tabaeño authorities still insisted: "We are the

[658] Gerardo Mendoza García, interview with author, Oaxaca City, Oaxaca, December 1, 2009. Original Spanish: "Pues, nadie, nadie, nadie dijo nada, solo cuando venimos aquí para hablar queríamos que nos ayudara la autoridad, dijo pues hay que cooperar con el pueblo; fue lo único que decían. Mejor hay que cooperar con el pueblo para que se acabe esto. Nunca dijo no, nunca dijo no, con los evangélicos no se metan porque si ellos están cooperando en carretera, en una escuela a ese sí, ahí sí, ahí sí, en todo están. Si se hace una escuela, una carretera, cualquier otra cosa, menos la iglesia, menos esa, es muy aparte. En todo están en todo, todo."

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law."[659] Yet that pronouncement did not stop Mendoza García and his family from practicing their faith despite losing their land and ancient rights as ciudadanos of San Juan Tabaá. As Mendoza García makes clear in his interview, the Pentecostal religion has actually grown in San Juan Tabaá, suggesting that sanctions imposed locally on Pentecostals actually strengthened individuals' commitment to the faith. INEGI census data overwhelmingly confirms that Oaxaca in 2012 is a much more heavily Protestant—mainly Pentecostal and fringe Christian— populated region than the early 1980s when Mendoza García was expelled from his community.

Yet violent expulsions of Protestant converts continue, leaving the state in an uncomfortable position of supporting usos y costumbres on one hand and the individual rights of Protestants on the other. Conflicts between customary and constitutional law can be seen as attempts by locals to defend their community by strengthening local autonomy and using tradition as a justification against outside influences. In terms of the greater context of indigenous autonomy and rights to customary rule in Mexico, religious conflicts are nascent examples of the contested nature of indigenous peoples' integration into the modern nation-state.The recent visit by Luis Palau juxtaposed with the current conflicts in the Sierra Norte speaks to the on-going multifaceted and complex nature of religious conflict in Oaxaca. On one hand, Oaxaca has a powerful evangelical Pastors network, the Confraternity of Evangelical Christian Pastors of Oaxaca (COPACEO), who in 2008 hosted the largest gathering ever of Oaxacan evangelicals. The growth of

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[659] Ibid. Original Spanish: "Yo, en aquel entonces estaba en México, radicaba yo en México y como yo tenía poco, tenía poquito de haber aceptado la palabra de Dios, que serán, unos 5 años, entonces automáticamente yo ya estaba con los hermanos evangélicos, ya los apoyaba yo, y cuando teníamos que vernos digamos aquí en Oaxaca, venían la autoridad y venían los hermanos de allá de mi pueblo y también venían dos, tres personas de México acá, para apoyar y así empezó, de tal manera que ellos,eh, lograron [los católicos de San Juan Tabaá] lo que quisieron allá en el pueblo y dijeron: "No, ahora vamos a hacer

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COPACEO exemplifies the intertwined religious and political bid for power on the part of the Pentecostal and Evangelical groups in Oaxaca. Yet in highly insular communities like San Andrés Yaa where Imeldo Amaya Gabriel was expelled for his non-compliance with usos y costumbres, constitutional law itself is ambivalent. Rather than waiting for the state government to intervene again, however, Amaya Gabriel posted a video of his expulsion on *YouTube,* instantly attracting a national and international audience to hear his testimonial of religious intolerance in Oaxaca and the state's inability to protect Protestants from acts of violence perpetrated by local Catholics.[660]

The conflicts elucidated in this dissertation articulate the conceptualization of sacred, political, and territorial spaces in both the physical and imaginary realm. In the early post-revolutionary period, Samuel Juárez García sought to establish a Baptist congregation in his hometown of San Jeronimo Tlacochahuaya. Later he planned to spread the Baptist faith throughout Zapotec communities in Oaxaca and Mayan villages in Chiapas. His evangelization in Chiapas never came to fruition due to competition from other Protestant denominations. Moreover, Juárez García's church had not stood a decade when local Catholics murdered him in 1935. Current Baptist families in the Zapotec community are working to rebuild the church and assert the minister's legacy as the first indigenous Baptist martyr in Mexico. Disputes brought by a Catholic neighbor over the boundaries of the original church property have obstructed the revived congregation. Yet Baptists in the community continue to meet on the original grounds and advance a collective and social memory of the late pastor as a crucial indigenous Protestant martyr.

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nosotros la ley", "Nosotros somos la ley," "Nosotros vamos a hacer la ley y nosotros lo que queramos eso vamos a hacer."

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In Chapter Four, the Yosondúan-SIL conflict over sacred and territorial space culminated in the expulsion of Summer Institute of Linguistics' missionaries in 1977 for allegedly entering a Mixtec burial ground without permission and removing pre-Hispanic artifacts. The conflict in Yosondúa was a local example of a national movement condemning the SIL as an imperialistic organization with too much power and authority in indigenous Mexico. In this example, the Mexican state ideologically moved from paternalistic *indigenismo* with its emphasis on the assimilation of indigenous peoples into the nation to a more participatory form of indigenism with a focus on the linguistically and culturally diverse nation. Yet as my oral histories suggest, the impact of the SIL's presence in Oaxaca is complex and contested. Some indigenous community members assert that the SIL's translation of the New Testament into local languages precipitated the indigenous rights movements of the 1970s and the revitalization of native languages. Without the early translation work and publication of dictionaries by the SIL, much of the contemporary bilingual education programs in Oaxaca would have had to start from scratch.

The SIL's entrenched presence in indigenous communities overlapped into discussions of indigenous rights and autonomy in Oaxaca. On one hand, the SIL argued that it was promoting indigenous identity and culture by recording their languages and affirming the importance of regional dialects. SIL opponents argued that by discouraging Protestants from participating in feast days and tequio assignments for the Church, the SIL was unraveling centuries of traditions and social adhesion. Protestantism intersects with indigenous identity at sharp and complex angles depending on one's positionality.

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[660] "Expulsión por intolerancia religiosa en Oaxaca,"

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The fluidity between sacred, political and communal space is also a constant theme in local municipal governments' commitment to maintaining the structural viability of colonial era Catholic Churches both as local and national cultural patrimony and as a central symbol of identity in indigenous communities. In Chapter Five, Tabaeño municipal authorities argued that all community members had to contribute funds and labor towards the Catholic Church's renovation project because it was the oldest Dominican Church in the Sierra Norte region of Oaxaca and contained valuable sixteenth century religious paintings and statues. Hence, for the local municipal authorities, participating in the tequio was not just about honoring a sacred space but also about one's civic duty to protect cultural patrimony at the physical center of the community.

This dissertation has also demonstrated the inability of the larger state, both at the Oaxacan state and national level, to enforce the Constitution and even their immediate rulings. Despite the mediation of the Department of Religious Affairs, many conflicts in Oaxaca evidence the ineffectiveness of state power. The legalization of usos and costumbres governance in 1995 has increased the Oaxacan state government's inability to enforce the individual rights of indigenous Protestants. Political scientist Todd Eisenstadt warns that advocates of indigenous autonomy "should also factor into their calculations the judicial 'no man's land,' which could result if excessively flexible customary practices are adopted without enforcement of accompanying laws."[661] As is apparent, especially in Chapters Three and Five, the friction between customary and constitutional law creates a legal vacuum into which the protection of the state comes too little or too

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http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0UMdP5Jh998, accessed July 1, 2012.

[661] Eisenstadt, "Strengthening Indigenous Rights While Weakening the Rule of Law? Customary Elections, the State, and Social Conflict in Mexico," article in preparation for *Comparative Politics*, 23.

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late for expelled Protestants. Within the local context of Oaxacan communities' conceptualization of *ciudadanía* (citizenship), questioning tequio projects or the civil-religious cargo hierarchal ladder is tantamount to subordinating ancient traditions and customs for the benefit of the modern nation-state.

Finally, this study has analyzed where power resides. Is it locally, regionally or nationally based? As my conflict cases have demonstrated, power resides in the community. Mayor Efraín Cruz Orozco's 1982 explanation of why Protestants could not build a church in his Zapotec community hinged on the supremacy of collective over individual rights in Santiago Choapan: "We have a careful agreement in this town that there is no other religion than the one that's already here."[662] Sometimes Protestants negotiated their new beliefs with traditional obligations and rituals but whether they are expelled, fined or victims of violence, it was determined in the local realm. The state government might have feuding parties sign an agreement to respect one another's religious beliefs. However, as we saw in Chapter Three with Bartolo Hernández López in Yolotepec de la Paz, and in Chapter Five with Gerardo Mendoza García in San Juan Tabaá and Imeldo Gabriel Amaya in San Andrés Yaa, an official paper from Oaxaca City had limited authority in their home communities because "aquí mande el pueblo [here the people rule]."[663] Even with the threat of intervention by state authorities, local authorities still held much power over the social-religious realm. The local authorities were not ready for a new relationship with the state whereby individuals like Mendoza García, not a leader representing the pueblo, could get the government's attention.

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[662] Efraín Cruz Orozco to Oaxacan Secretary General in AGAO, "Relacionados con Tequios" 1/131.7/ (1-30) 82/333, January 29, 1982. Original Spanish: "Porque en esta población, hay un acuerdo de Ciudadanos que ya no haya otra religión que la que ya está."

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Indigenous Oaxacans were crucial actors in a complex web of religious tradition, transformation, and negotiation. The Summer Institute of Linguistics, in institutional reports, popular media and through missionary-linguists, consistently portrayed its organization as protecting vulnerable indigenous peoples from the onslaught of modern civilization. In Chapter Four, the missionary-linguist couple, Kathryn and Ed Farris worried about preparing Mixtecs in Santiago Yosondúa from temptations they faced through contact with mestizos or migration. On the other hand, INI, the Catholic Church, and anthropologists paint indigenous peoples as victims of well-heeled, divisive, imperialistic North American Protestant organizations. Both of these premises leave little room for indigenous agency.

Indigenous peoples' relationship with Protestant organizations (not just the SIL) was more complicated and less black and white than the above entails. Some indigenous people strongly supported the SIL, arguing that Protestantism strengthened indigenous identity by focusing on revitalization of indigenous languages. Even Oaxacan bilingual language promoters acknowledged the positive benefits from some of the non-religious SIL publications such as dictionaries and recordings of ancient folk tales. Communities fought over Protestantism by articulating that religious competition fomented divisions, discouraged collective rights, customary law and was generally incompatible with indigenous cultures/identities.

While various political, academic, and religious institutions claimed to speak 'for' indigenous peoples, indigenous peoples also wrote letters of protest to state and federal authorities to curb the incursion of Protestantism. In San Juan Juquila, conflict over the

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[663] Saúl Jiménez Crispin to Carballido González, Attorney General, Oaxaca, February 15, 1982,

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refusal of Jehovah's Witnesses to participate in key tequio projects affirms the strength of customary over constitutional law. When government mediator Saúl Jiménez Crispin tried to settle the dispute in favor of individual rights to religious freedom, mayor Félix Tiburcio Espina warned the mediator: "Tell your government that here the people rule and if you don't get rid of these Jehovah's Witnesses we are going to close the Municipal office and the state government can do whatever it pleases."[664] By threatening to shut down their municipal offices if the government sides with the Protestants, indigenous leaders like Tiburcio Espina were affirming that they had the authority to rule the way that they believed worked for local social and political dynamics. Indigenous leaders' protest letters frame their opposition to Protestantism around the premise that it violated the social norms at the heart of their communities' identity—tequio and cargo— leading to violence and divisions.

This dissertation began with a quotation from Presbyterian missionary Lawrence Van Slyke. The Reverend hoped "to win to the Protestant religion the same race that produced Benito Juárez."[665] The growth of Protestantism in Oaxaca certainly has important roots in late nineteenth century and interwar period North American missionary campaigns. Yet the fact that over half a million Oaxacans identified in the 2010 census as Protestants also speaks to the inherently local and continued strength of Protestantism in Oaxaca. As Pentecostalism and, increasingly, fringe Christian denominations such as Jehovah's Witnesses rapidly increase in Oaxaca and especially

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Dependencia: Asuntos Agrarios, Expediente: San Juan Juquila Mixes, Yautepec, Oaxaca. AGEPEO.

[664] Ibid. Original Spanish: "'Dígale a su Gobierno aquí manda el pueblo y si no corren a esos individuos, Los Testigos de Jehová, vamos a cerrar el Municipio y que el Gobierno haga lo que quiera.'"

[665] Lawrence P. Van Slyke, as quoted in W. Reginald Wheeler, *Modern Missions in Mexico* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1925), 280-281.

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Benito Juárez's natal region of the Sierra Norte, it is clear that Protestant Oaxacans are also looking to convert on their own terms.

The historical production of political and religious spaces in Oaxacan communities has changed over time from a shared local identity to a more regionally, nationally and increasingly trans-national one. Evangélicos were able to maintain, reclaim, or strengthen trans-regional and transnational indigenous identity through migration, education, and religious change that united them with indigenous citizens throughout Oaxaca, Mexico, and the United States. While local leaders argued that conversion disrupted centuries' old traditions and community adhesion, conversion also produced a new type of identity unconstrained by territorial borders. Through their identification as evangélicos, indigenous Protestants united across political, geographic, and ethnic borders. In the process, they redefined what it meant to be indigenous, to be Mexican, and to be Christian.

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Appendix A: Abbreviations Used in Text

CBNM: Convención Bautista Nacional de México/National Baptist Convention of

Mexico

CCI: Centro Coordinador Indigenista/Indigenist Coordinating Center

CEAS: Colegio de Etnólogos y Antropólogos Sociales/National College of Ethnologists and Social Anthropologists

CELAM: Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano/Latin American Episcopal Conference
CIESAS: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social/Center for Social Anthropology Research
CNDH: Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos/National Commission on Human Rights
COCEI: Coalición de Obreros, Campesinos y Estudiantes del Istmo/Coalition of Workers, Peasants, and Students of the Isthums

CONEDEF: Comité Nacional Evangélico de Defensa/National Evangelical Defense

Committee

COPACEO: Confraternidad de Pastores Cristianos Evangélicos del Estado de Oaxaca/ Confraternity of Evangelical Christian Pastors of Oaxaca

DAAI: Departamento Autónomo de Asuntos Indígenas/Department of Indigenous Affairs

DAR: Departamento de Asuntos Religiosos/Department of Religious Affairs

EZLN: Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional/Zapatista National Liberation Army

FIOB: Frente Indígena Oaxaqueño Binacional/Oaxacan Binational Indigenous Front

ILV: Instituto Lingüístico de Verano/Summer Institute of Linguistics

INAH: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia/ National Anthropology and History Institute

INI: Instituto Nacional Indigenista/National Indigenist Institute

JAARS: Jungle Aviation and Radio Service

MIEPI: Movimiento Iglesia Evangélica Pentecostés Independiente/Independent Evangelical Pentecostal Church Movement

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PAN: Partido de Acción Nacional/National Action Party

PRD: Partido de la Revolución Democrática/Party of the Democratic Revolution

PRI: Partido Revolucionario Institucional/Institutional Revolutionary Party

SEP: Secretaría de Educación Pública/Ministry of Public Education

SIL: Summer Institute of Linguistics/Instituto Lingüístico de Verano

WBT: Wycliffe Bible Translators

WCC: World Council of Churches

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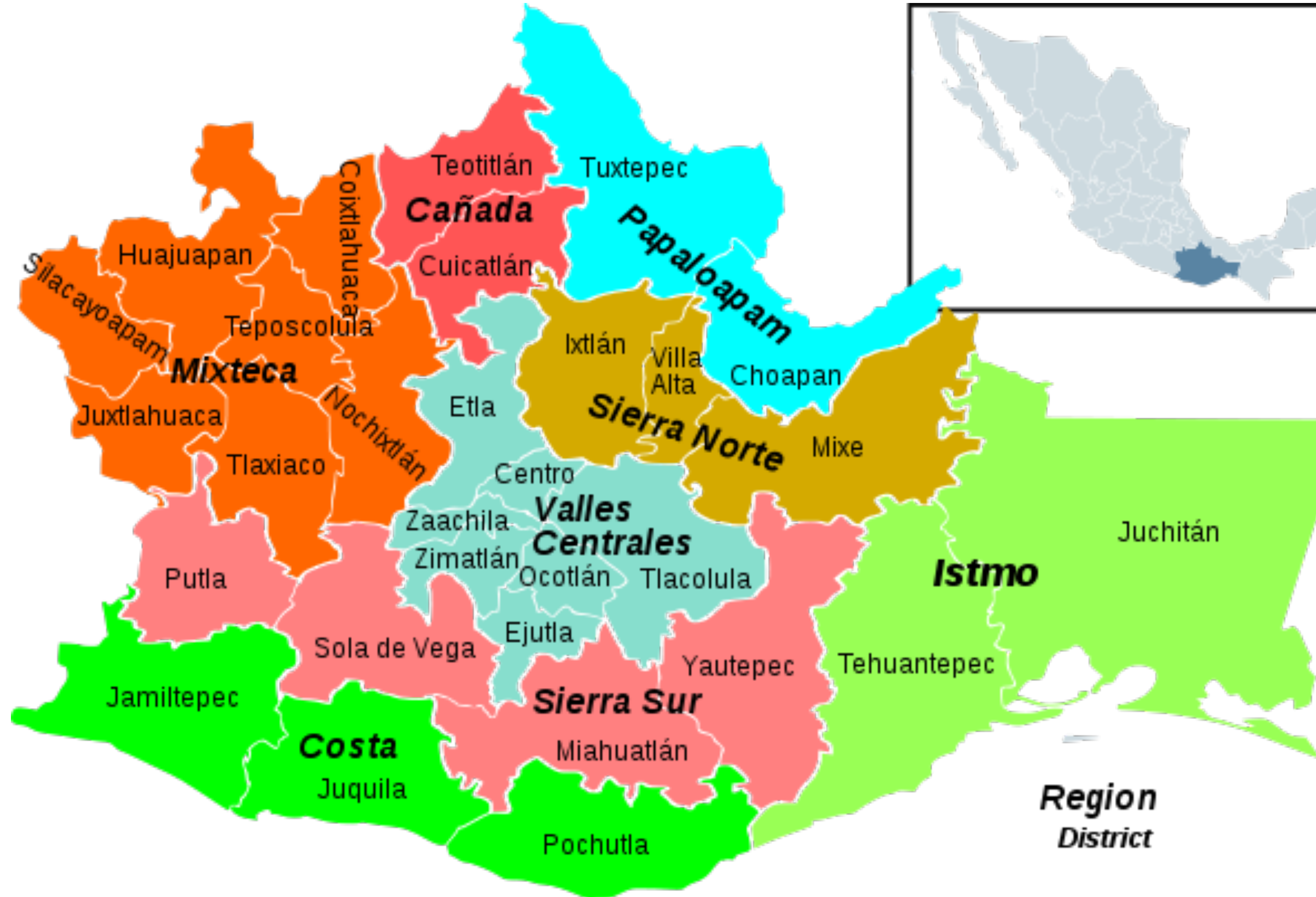
Appendix B: Oaxaca's Regions and Districts



Source: Map_of_Oaxaca.svg.

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